

THE HOUSE ON EDGE OF THINGS

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ETHEL COOK ELIOT

THE HOUSE ON THE EDGE
OF THINGS

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The House ON The Edge OF Things

by

ETHEL COOK ELIOT



ILLUSTRATED BY
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TO MY MOTHER

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Chapter I

Kenelm & The Red Leaf

ONCE upon a time there was a little boy named Kenelm who lived with his grandmother in a poor hovel on the edge of a deep forest. These two lived quite alone for all their relatives were dead. The old woman and the little boy were the best of

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friends in spite of the half century's difference in their ages. Kenelm called his grandmother "Grandame," which was only a pet name for grandmother, and she called him just "Kenelm," which showed that she respected him and was always courteous to him, even though he was so little.

They were very poor. The only living they had was the few pennies a week that Grandame could make by selling toys, which she carved out of bits of wood that Kenelm picked up for her in the forest. She sold the toys to the children who lived in the village, down in the valley. Kenelm used to carry the toys down to the children, for the children never would have dared to go up to Grandame's hovel; and they were even afraid of little Kenelm, for their mothers had told them that Grandame was a witch. There was no reason for anyone's thinking Grandame a witch, except, perhaps, that she made toys so cleverly.

Kenelm was a lonely little boy because he had no other little boys to play with. Because he was so poor and wore such mean clothes, the village mothers did not want their children to make friends with him.

"There is no need in being so poor!" they would say to one another, when he passed their gates with a basket of toys on his arm. "Nobody else is so poor! See, he hasn't even shoes on his feet! It must all be because of Grandame's being a witch!"

But, except for his mean clothes, Kenelm looked

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not so very different from any of the village children. He was seven years old, rather small for his age, but wonderfully sturdy. His light brown hair grew thick and strong on his head, and Grandame kept it clipped short just above his ears. His eyes were wide and blue and seemed to say, "I want to be friends with everyone. Be friends with me!"

But the village mothers always looked away and would not see his eyes. As for the children, they were always so greedily peeping into the basket at the toys there, they never thought of him. So it happened that Kenelm was usually glad when the last toy was sold and he could run away out of the village and play by himself in the forest. But in spite of everything, Kenelm was destined to be happy. This is the story of his happiness, and this is how it began:

One morning, late in the fall, Grandame awoke to find it suddenly very cold. She went over to Kenelm's little bed on the floor by the hearth and shook him awake, but gently.

"Quick, be up! Run into the forest and fetch me some sticks. It is high time for a fire. Winter has come!" she cried.

Kenelm jumped up. "Let's have breakfast first," he begged. "For it is so cold in the forest on a morning like this when I have no breakfast in me! I shall freeze!"

Grandame's face fell. "The last bit of bread is gone," she said, "and there will be no more until we

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have sold a toy or two. The children seem tired of all the old kinds. But find me a good piece of wood to carve, as you return, and I will make something to open their eyes,—an elf that grins, and has long pointed ears! How they will laugh! And we shall feast!”

To have no bread until that night! Kenelm felt already that he was starving. But he ran bravely out of the hovel into the forest, calling hopefully back over his shoulder, “I’ll try to find some nuts, too, and we shall breakfast on those.”

The air was sharp and frosty. There were little patches of thin ice in the hollows. Kenelm liked to stick his toes into them, when he had shoes on, and see the ice crackle and burst into a million sparkling bits,—but it was not really winter yet, so he was bare-foot, for he had to save his shoes until the snow should come. Now he drew his little jacket tightly about him and, shivering, began to look around on the ground for dead branches that might have been blown down by last night’s wind.

At that minute a fiery red leaf drifted down from the forest-roof, skipped along the ground a little way, and then sprang up to whirl and dance in the air. Kenelm was surprised to see the red leaf, because the trees were mostly bare, and whatever leaves were flying around were brown and withered ones. He watched it dancing before him, wide-eyed, until he

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thought, "Oh, I must catch it and take it home to Grandame, it is so red!"

But that leaf was not so easy to catch as he had imagined. The wind whisked it on and on, and now hundreds and hundreds of dead brown leaves were flying with it straight away into the deep forest. Kenelm ran after, and sometimes his hands almost closed on it, but, just in the nick of time, it always got away, now spinning high in the air above his head, now skimming the ground much faster than he could ever run.

At last he cried, "It's a mad leaf! I'll never catch it," and he stopped, panting and leaning against a tree. Then quite suddenly the leaf turned about and came toward him right against the wind, while the hundreds and hundreds of dead brown leaves swept on like a storm and were lost in the forest.

Soon Kenelm saw how it was that the leaf could come against the wind, for it was not a leaf at all, but a woman in a red cloak.

She was beautiful. Her hair was black, black as the forest at dead of night, and it hung heavily just to her shoulders. Out of this black hair her face shone palely. But her eyes were filled with leaping lights that danced, and kept dancing, out and in, making Kenelm think of the red leaf he had just been chasing.

This Stranger-Woman came up to Kenelm and

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looked at him fully. Then she would have gone on, but Kenelm put out his hand and took hold of her bright cloak.

"Oh, do not go away. Wait. I am lonely, and your face is friendly!" he said longingly.

Perhaps it was wonder at Kenelm's courage, or perhaps pity for his poor cold feet, for she did stay and asked, "What have you there in your other hand, little friend?"

"Oh, this is only a dead stick to make a fire with."

The light stood still in the Stranger-Woman's eyes at his answer. She looked amazed.

"Only a stick!" she exclaimed. "Little boy, the thing you have in your hand is a *wonderful* thing. Come, sit down by me on this log and I will teach you how to make songs about just such wonderful things."

So Kenelm sat down beside the Stranger-Woman on a log in the deep, cold forest while she taught him how to make little verses about common things, such as sticks and stones and grass and houses and mills and fires, and heat and cold and roads—and many other wonderful, common things.

When he was all taught,—“Now make verses,” said the Stranger-Woman, “and you will forget that you are hungry and cold and lonely. I have taught you a fine thing!”

Then she drew her red cloak about her, and the wind carried a fiery red leaf, dancing and rustling



. . . he neither saw them, nor heard the noise of their horses' feet.

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over the brown earth-floor, far away into the deepest place in the forest. Kenelm stared after it. "She was only a leaf after all," he thought. He gathered his arms full of dead branches, found a piece of wood right for Grandame to make into an elf, and started for home.

On his way, he came on to the road leading down into the village, for it skirted the forest at that place. There he sat down on a stone and began to sing a song about the fire he and Grandame would make with the branches he was carrying. It was his first song, and as he sang he was very glad that the Stranger-Woman had taught him how to make them.

You sticks, that seem so dead,
Shall stir again,
And bloom like summer roses
And be a flame.

Then we shall laugh out loud
As we draw near.
In frosty winter weather
We love your cheer.

He was so pleased with the words that sang themselves into his head that he very soon forgot how cold and hungry he was, and finally even forgot that he was sitting by the road, for when the Queen with some ladies and knights of her court came riding by, he neither saw them, nor heard the noise of their horses' feet. But they saw him and heard the song

he was singing. And they drew up their horses and sat very quietly, waiting for it to end.

It was only a little song, but when Kenelm came to the end, he liked it so well that he went straight back to the beginning and sang it all over again, in a louder voice.

When he at last looked up, there sat the Queen on her high horse, and behind her were ladies and knights on horses just as high. They were all looking smilingly at Kenelm. It was the Queen who was the most smiling, however, for she loved little children and little songs.

"The boy is a poet," she cried, "and there can never be too many poets in a kingdom! But oh, we have found this little songster just in time! For see how poor he seems, and cold and pinched! We must take him home with us to live at the Castle. We must see that he never suffers like this again!"

She motioned and one of the knights rode forward and lifted Kenelm high, high and set him before him on his horse. Kenelm's heart leapt with fear. He hid his face. "Don't take me away," he cried.

The Queen was surprised. "Don't you want to come with us?" she asked.

Kenelm was only a little boy and he could not keep the frightened tears from his eyes.

"Grandame would freeze if I went. I get sticks for her fire!"

The Queen laughed and so did the others. "If

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that is all that is troubling you," she said, "we will see that your Grandame has plenty of fire. Come with us and we will make you rich and happy, little songster."

But Kenelm still shook his head. "Grandame would *miss* me too much," he whispered, trembling.

"What can the funny little fellow mean?" asked the Queen. She was really puzzled.

The others shook their heads, too, in a wondering way, except one of the ladies who timidly suggested, "He may mean that he loves his Grandame, and that she would be sad to lose him."

"Oh," said the Queen, "then he must stay with her. . . . But be sure that you write down all your songs, little poet, and save them for me. You shall come to see the Castle and sing for us. And you shall have a pension for being a poet and showing us the beautiful side of things. And the pension will be big enough, too, to keep any child happy. Come here to me."

Kenelm slipped down from the great horse, and went and stood on tiptoe by the Queen. She bent and whispered into his ear how much his pension would be, and when he was to come to see her first. It was a very large sum for a little boy to have every year for his own. And he was to go to the Queen tomorrow. He was overwhelmed.

Just then his eyes fell for the first time on the little Princess who was sitting on her own little pony

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behind her mother. Her face was like a pink rose petal and her long shining hair blew all about in the wind. Kenelm, looking at her sweetness, suddenly remembered his bare feet and mean clothes. He felt ashamed and looked away from the little Princess.

Then the company moved on. But Kenelm stood wriggling his bare toes and looking down at them very hard until the last one of that company had ridden away. It was then he remembered that he had not taken off his cap to the Queen. But after all he had none, so how could he have taken it off if he *had* remembered his manners!

No, he would not fret about that. He began to run and leap and speed along towards home. He, lonely little Kenelm, despised by the villagers and their children, was to make songs for the Queen! Oh! Ah-h-h! . . .

Grandame met him at the door. "It took you a long time," she said, "and it is terribly, terribly cold inside. But after all you are a good boy!"

Her scoldings always ended with "But you are a good boy!"

The good boy threw his armful of branches on to the floor, seized Grandame's hands and jumped up and down, and then up and down again, too full of joy, and too short of breath to tell her what had happened. Soon she made him sit down on a little stool till his breath should come back.

While waiting for Kenelm to get his breath,

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Grandame built and lighted the fire. When it was blazing away, they drew their stools up to it; and then Kenelm told all about the Stranger-Woman, the song and the Queen.

"But how can something first be a leaf, and then a woman, and then a leaf again?" he interrupted himself once to ask.

"Nobody knows. Things like that just are," said Grandame.

When he told how the Queen had wanted to carry him off to the Castle, Grandame looked uneasy, but she did not say anything. But when he told how he had shaken his head and said he could not leave Grandame, she suddenly, and to his utter surprise, threw her apron over her head and burst into tears. Quickly she dried her eyes and laughed.

"Ah, Kenelm dear," she cried, "you gave me such a fright! I thought perhaps you had gone with them!"

Then how Kenelm laughed! For that Grandame had been thinking he could be in two places at once was very funny.

When all was told, Grandame had only one question. It was: "What are we going to do with all that money?"

Kenelm had already thought of that. "We'll tear down this little hovel and build a real house first, and then we'll ask the village orphans to come and live in it with us. Five boys living in one house and play-

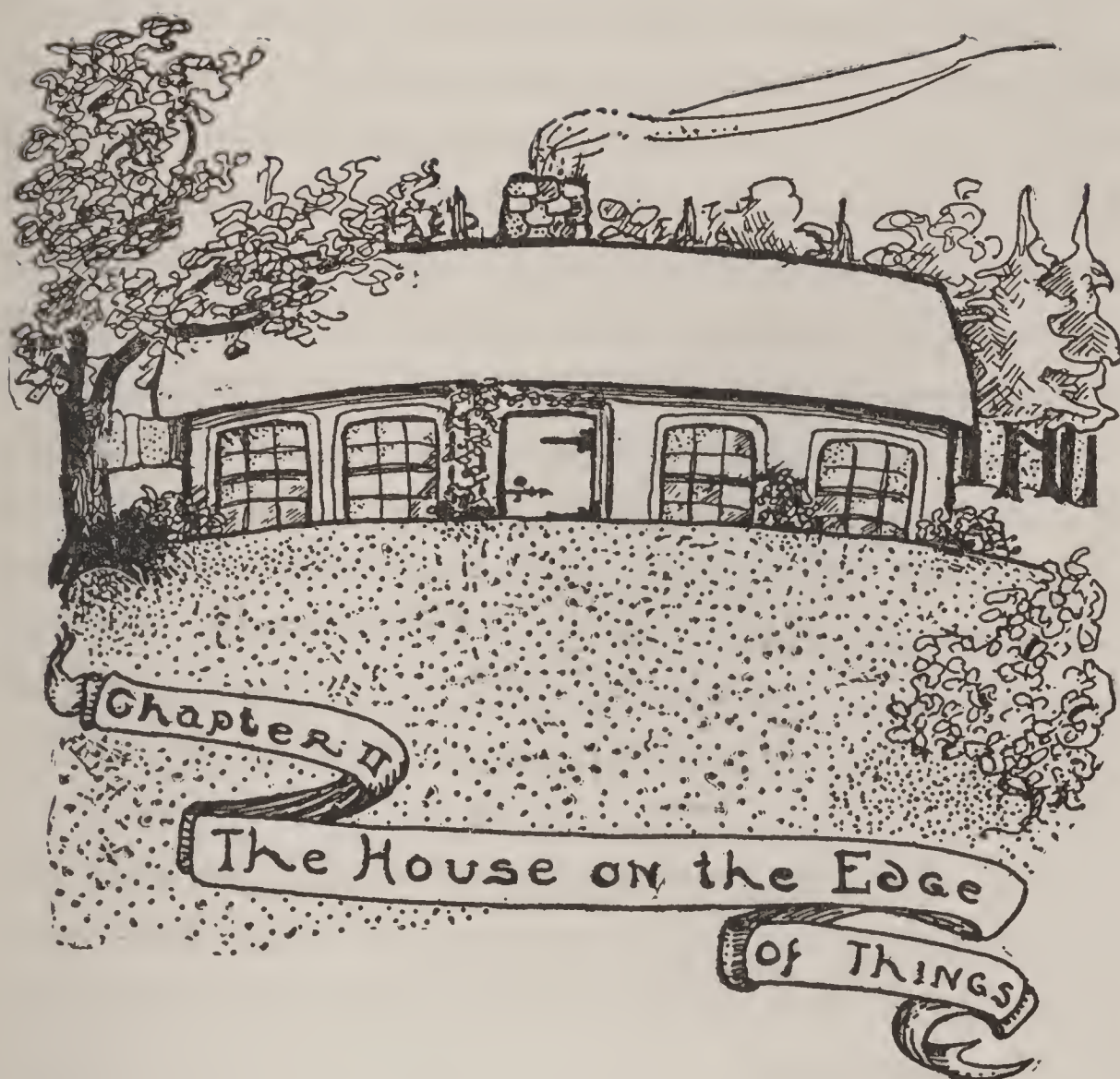
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ing together all day long! How happy! How happy! There is plenty of pension for that, isn't there?"

Yes, Grandame thought that the pension the Queen had promised would do quite well for a family of five boys. And when Kenelm next day went to see the Queen as he had promised, he told her the plan. She listened with bent head and Kenelm saw tears sparkling in her eyes. "Queens wear them like jewels, maybe," he thought.

"That is a fine idea," she said at last. "I shall see to the building of the house myself. By spring it should be done."

Kenelm clapped his hands.



THE four children who were called the “village orphans” were very unfortunate little beings until that wonderful spring day of spring days when they went up to live with Kenelm and Grandame in the new house.

They were four brothers whose mother and father had died, and left them all alone in the world, when they were very little. Because almost every family

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in the village already had several children in it, there was no one who wanted to adopt the orphans. So the village mothers hit upon a plan—

“We will have to take turns in caring for them,” they said, “for we can’t let them starve in our midst!”

And that is how it came about that these children never had known a home but had been passed from house to house all their lives. As soon as they were big enough to help at all, they were set to carrying water, sweeping hearths, and tending fires. While other children played happily in the village streets, the orphans must do nothing but work, work, till their little backs ached, and their child-hearts were near to breaking. Perhaps it was because the village mothers gave so much love to their own children, they had so little to spare for the four homeless boys.

But everything was changed for the orphans that wonderful spring day of spring days when they went up to make their home with Kenelm and Grandame in the new house.

The house was large and square and painted white. Blinds had never been heard of in that country; so the windows that ran all round the house made it seem a place to be looked out of instead of into. Kenelm called the windows the “eyes of the house.”

Although the house looked so grand and large from the village below, it was really very plain. Will you

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believe me when I tell you there were only three rooms? Well, that is all there were.

First and best of all, was the great kitchen. One came right into it through the front door. All the cooking was done there in a fireplace. The dining table was there, standing in the middle of the floor. The windows looked out of the kitchen on three sides, for it was the whole front of the house.

Back of the kitchen was the sleeping room. Five little oaken chests stood there in a row. Every child had a chest of his own, and in it he kept his clothes and everything in the world that belonged to him. Across the covers of these chests mattresses were spread and over the mattresses were thrown light, bright blankets. The children slept on these chests as we sleep in our beds. There was nothing else in that room, for nothing else was needed. It was only a place to sleep in. There were windows on two sides there. Six windows looked towards the east, and you can imagine how the sunshine flooded in early in the morning!

The last room of all was Grandame's. It was much smaller than the other two. The walls were mostly windows, and in front of the windows ran a work bench. Grandame still went on with her toy-making because she liked to. Only now she *gave* the toys away to any child who asked.

Just at first, the orphans were shy and quiet, for

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they had been treated harshly so long they had almost forgotten that kindness and joy and good fun were still in the world. But before they had finished their first meal in the happy kitchen they had learned to laugh and to be merry.—What a picture this queer new family made at the table!

At the head sat Grandame. Oh, you have never seen a grandmother like Grandame! She was little and frail, but light and airy as a thin blade of grass that waves and sparkles in the wind and sun.

At her right sat Peter. He must have been about eleven years old. He was big and sturdy, with laughing blue eyes and a freckled face.

Then came Stephen, a beautiful boy, with long curling lashes, very shy and very gentle.

At the foot of the table sat Kenelm. Kenelm, as you know, was a poet-boy with a friendly face for all the world.

Alwin came next. He was overflowing with life. Seeing him there at the table, one expected him to jump up at any minute and run, run, run away.

Little Christopher was the youngest. He sat at Grandame's left hand. He was a chubby little fellow with blowing curls and eyes brimmed full of wonder.

There you have the children, and the children's house. Now you shall have their adventures—for they were many and strange. That was a wonderful

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forest behind their house. It was full of fairy creatures!

In the spring, when the wind blows,
Everything has wings,—
The tall trees, the white clouds,
Birds, grass, Earth-Children's feet,
And the House on the Edge of Things.¹

Wings! Wings!
Spring gives everything wings!
(From Kenelm's verses.)

¹ Kenelm named his house the "House on the Edge of Things" because it came into his verse and rhymed with wings.



NOW when five little boys live together in one house there is a great deal of work to be done by somebody. Although the children helped all they could, still there were many things which they could not do, and so Grandame had to have a servant to help her. The servant was a strong, hearty peasant woman, who lived with her husband, who was a laborer by day, in a little hut on the edge of the vil-

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lage. Every morning, just as the sun rose, she came striding up the hill to the House on the Edge of Things. She worked there all day, cooking meals, mending torn clothes and sweeping the floors.

But at first she never would talk to the children. She was always too busy with her work. She only noticed them to cry to them to get out of the kitchen or to keep their hands out of the cooky jar. Besides being very cross, she was not very pleasant to look at. Her face was as brown as a tree trunk and her great hands were red and chapped. Moreover, she drew her hair back skin tight and fastened it in a hard knot with three wooden hairpins.

Now because the servant was so cross and so ugly, the children delighted to tease her. One morning when they were all having breakfast, Peter cried, "Hurry up with that mush, Mrs. Old Snail!"

Kenelm laughed. "She *is* a snail," he said, "for see how her hair in the back twists around and looks like the tip of a shell!"

The servant became very angry at that, and slammed Peter's bowl of mush down before him so hard that it almost broke. "Take care with the dishes," warned Kenelm, still laughing very much. "They're ours and you'll have to pay for any you break!"

The servant answered never a word but stamped back to the fireplace and began banging the pans about. The children laughed. They thought it

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great fun to be able to order someone around, even such a great, stupid servant as theirs.

That afternoon when they were playing hide-and-go-seek in the forest, the servant came out of the house with a bundle slung over her shoulders and walked away among the trees. Kenelm and Peter had chosen the same hiding place, a little hollow between two rocks. When they caught sight of the servant Peter whispered, "She has blankets in that bundle. She is going to wash them in the stream."

"Let's follow her and frighten her by making her think we are goblins," suggested Kenelm.

Peter was delighted with the idea. "But how shall we make her think we are goblins?" he questioned.

There was a bush growing near the children loaded down with dark blue berries.

"We'll smear our faces with berry juice," said Kenelm. "It will make us all purplish. Then when she is washing the clothes we'll jump out of the shadows at her and scream."

Gleefully they gathered their hands full of berries and crushed them, rubbing the juice all over their faces. It made them look like goblins indeed. They chuckled when they thought how frightened the poor servant would be.

Then they started off towards the stream. It ran through one of the wildest parts of the forest and the children had to make their way through underbrush and over rocks. The farther in they went, the

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closer the trees crowded together. Although it was only the middle of the afternoon, under those trees it was like twilight. The underbrush often grew higher than the boys' shoulders, and often they got all tangled up in it and had to stop to help each other out.

But all that did not trouble them very much, for they kept chuckling and chuckling, while they thought how very frightened the servant would be when they jumped at her out of that twilight squeaking like goblins. She would scream, they thought, and turn around, and when her eyes lighted on their purple faces, she would drop the clothes into the stream and run away screaming and screaming at the top of her lungs.

But suddenly Peter broke off in the very middle of a chuckle, and Kenelm, who was behind him, heard him swallow his breath. He stopped and Kenelm stopped. "What was that?" whispered Peter.

"What? Where? I don't see anything."

"It was a tiny little man. His face was purple like ours and he was wearing a little hairy suit. He was staring at us from under those bushes just ahead. When he saw me looking at him he jumped out and ran into the shadow and hid. Let's go back. Oh, Kenelm, let's go back!"

Kenelm turned and looked fearfully behind him. The bushes through which the children had fought their way had drawn together again. The sky could

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not be seen at all because the branches overhead grew too thickly. But just ahead gleamed one ray of sunlight. They dared not go back and so they went forward, but this time side by side and holding hands.

In a minute they broke suddenly out of the underbrush and stood in a clearer place. Here the ground was smooth as glass. It was slippery with pine needles. They were in a little pine grove. Not very far ahead of them stood the goblin. His eyes were blinking and blinking at them. Although neither of the children had ever seen a goblin before they knew that this was one. They knew it by his long pointed feet, and by the sharpness of his eyes, and by his hairy suit. He stood still as a statue, blinking at them, and then he suddenly ran away again into the shadows that now were growing deeper in the forest.

The children hurried on, hand in hand. Here on the smooth needles they could run, and perhaps never children ran as they did then. They fairly flew along. But all the way they saw sharp little eyes peering at them from shadows, and Peter heard something that sounded like little pointed feet flopping along and just keeping pace with them. Kenelm heard the sound too but all the time he thought it was his own heart beating.

At last they did hear something surely, and it brought joy to their hearts. It was the sound of water flowing. When they were quite sure that it

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was the stream they stopped and whispered together.

"Now that we're here we might as well frighten her just the same," said Peter. "And then we'll make her take us home. She is so big she'll keep the goblins away and besides make a path through the underbrush."

So they stole quietly from pine tree to pine tree, and at last they came where they could see the stream. At first, they thought it was not the stream at all but a golden road, for it was so bright it almost blinded their eyes. The late afternoon sun was shining full upon it. They looked for the servant but they could not see her. Just then they heard a splash,—splash. It came from the other side of a large rock on the edge of the stream. The servant must be behind that rock, and the splash—splash be made by the clothes, as she soused them up and down in the water.

They stole up to the rock.

"Climb up," whispered Peter, "and peep over and see if it is really our servant."

Yes, it was the servant and she was sousing the clothes up and down in the stream. That was all as he had expected but everything else was strange. Kenelm could hardly believe his eyes. She had taken the huge wooden hairpins out of her hair and now it fell down her back. It reached almost to the ground in long, strong waves. It was as bright and golden as the stream. Some ends of it fell into the water as she bent down and when she pushed them

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back out of her way, they were dripping with gold.

Presently she turned around and began making the clothes which she had washed into a bundle. Never had the servant looked so large. The muscles stood out on her brown arms as she tied the knots. Kenelm saw for the first time that those great arms were magnificent. Her face was no longer cross, for she was humming a little song to herself. It seemed as though the song came from away down within her great breast. It was like the deep voice of the ocean. Kenelm came near falling from the rock, but ended by sliding down.

"She is there," he whispered to Peter, "and she is our servant, and yet she isn't *like* our servant. Climb up and see if I am dreaming!"

Peter scrambled up. He fell down. "She is a *goddess* and not our servant at all. Why didn't you tell me there were goddesses in the forest?"

"No, she isn't a goddess," said Kenelm, "for didn't you see the three wooden hairpins on the ground! And her arms! Nobody but our servant could have such fine, large arms!" With one accord the two boys climbed up the rock again, this time together. The servant was just tying the last knot in the bundle. She picked up her three wooden hairpins, and gathered all her shining hair in her hands, screwed it back into the hard knot which the boys knew. Then she swung the bundle of dripping clothes over her shoulders and started for home. The children

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slid down the side of the rock which she had just left and stood there, hardly knowing what to do. Peter was whispering over and over, "She's a goddess! Our servant is a goddess!"

Kenelm said nothing; his awe and wonder were too great.

Soon Peter cried: "Hurry, or she'll be out of sight!"

So they ran around the rock, and followed the servant home through the forest. They were not afraid now, although it was nearly dark under the trees, because the servant looked so strong and well able to protect them, as she hurried along with enormous strides.

When they came to the pine grove, there was the goblin running around on the slippery pine needles, every little while taking great leaps into the air. When he caught sight of the servant he stopped and stood blinking at her as he had at the boys. But she paid no more attention to him than as though he were a squirrel.

As they pierced into the underbrush again there was whispering and rustling, and then came a sound of little feet flopping along beside them. But the children did not take their eyes from the broad back of the servant. She, of course, never dreamed they were there at all, and so they reached home.

Kenelm and Peter went into the house at her heels, and after washing the purple stain from their faces,

sat down in a corner of the kitchen watching the servant as she moved about preparing the supper. She was as silent as always. But never again would those children look at her with the same eyes as before. In every movement they saw the goddess, and they stared at the hard knot of her hair with wonder.

By the time supper was on the table, the other boys had come rushing in. They were glad when they saw Peter and Kenelm and pretended that they thought the witches or goblins had caught them and carried them off.

—After supper Grandame opened a story book and the children drew about her on the low step outside the door. There was light enough yet in the west to read by.

“There is a picture with this story,” said Grandame, and the boys jumped up from their places and pressed about her, all trying to see it at the same time.

Only Kenelm was not interested. He was watching the servant through the door as she put the last dishes away, washed her hands, hung up her apron and put on her shawl. Then she came out, and saying goodnight to them all in a rough voice, went away down the hill.

Kenelm ran down the hill after her. Peter was the only one who saw him go—the others were so interested in the picture—and he jumped down from the step and ran down the hill too. Soon he overtook Kenelm, who explained, “I want to peep into

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the house of our servant, for, the house of a goddess must be a strange and wonderful place!"

So they followed the servant down the hill to her little hut on the edge of the village. It was quite dark by the time they reached it. The servant went quickly in and closed the door after her. The children ran around the house, and standing on their toes, peeped in at the one little window. There was only one room in the hut. There was nothing there but a bed made of straw on the floor and a rough table with two chairs drawn up to it. In the corner there was a stone fire place with a hearth, clean-swept.

The servant straightway set about getting supper for her husband, who had not yet come home from his work. But first she let down her hair again. It was as golden in candlelight as it had been in sunlight. She was a goddess again as she strode about the tiny room. Presently her husband came up from the town. He did not see the children looking in at his window, although he passed so close to them that their hearts almost stopped beating. He was a big working man in dirty working clothes. But when he had kissed his wife and taken off his dirty coat, he, too, suddenly looked quite different. He became a great powerful shining giant. Ah! He was a fit mate for the goddess!

Then those two sat down to supper. That was a wonderful sight! The goddess' hair touched the floor on either side, and it dripped gold in the candle-

THE HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THINGS

light. Then a strange thing happened. When those two began to break their bread, the children, a-tip-toe at the window, heard the finest music in the world. It came from the walls of the little hut and it grew louder and louder until it sounded like men marching. The goddess and the shining giant lifted their heads and looked at each other smiling as though it were no new sound to them. Then they fell to and ate heartily.

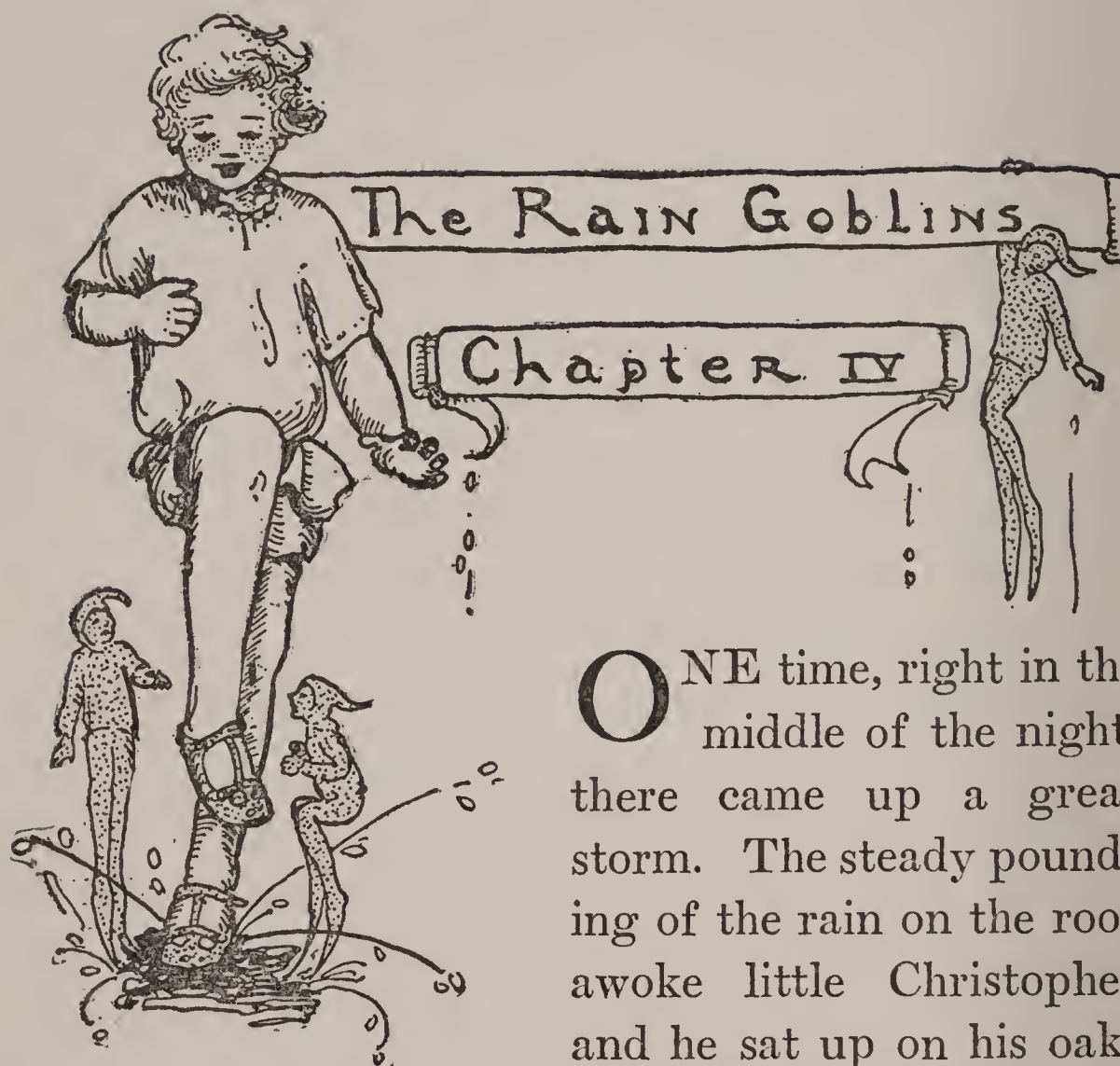
Kenelm and Peter ran home. It was pitch dark, and Grandame was standing in the doorway with a lighted candle in her hand and a frightened look on her face. When Kenelm and Peter suddenly came out of the darkness before her, she seized them both and cried, "You wicked children! To run away and give me such a fright! I shall punish you!" She then boxed their ears, but not hard, and said, "After all, you are good children!"

The other children were all sound asleep on their oaken chests. Kenelm and Peter had to undress very quietly in the dark so as not to waken them.

As for Kenelm, he did not want to go to sleep that night at all for fear he might not wake up in time to see the goddess come striding up the hill with the sun behind her in the morning. It was wonderful to think that a goddess was cooking their meals, mending their clothes and sweeping their floors. But even so at last he had to fall asleep!

THE GODDESS

When the Wind ran over the grass,
Once I looked hard
And saw things pass.
It was a whole crowd of the little folk,
But they fled away
When I pointed and spoke.
(From Kenelm's verses.)



ONE time, right in the middle of the night, there came up a great storm. The steady pounding of the rain on the roof awoke little Christopher and he sat up on his oaken chest to listen. Down came the rain in a steady pour. It sounded like thunder sometimes and sometimes like the thud of many horses' hoofs over the roof and over the ground. All the other children slept soundly. Only Christopher was awake.

Slowly the storm grew less and less noisy, until at

THE RAIN GOBLINS

last it was just an ordinary rain. But Christopher still sat straight up on his little oaken chest, because now he was hearing new and strange sounds. Splash, splash, went something under the windows, and then came a noise like many little feet running round and round the house, and then more splash-splashes.

Christopher jumped to the floor, and ran to one of the windows. The moon was trying to come out after the hard shower, but she was not succeeding very well. Yet there was light enough for Christopher to see a little.

Round and round the house, under the windows, were running little brown, long-footed people. They were the Rain Goblins, but Christopher did not know that until afterwards. They were playing a wild game of tag,—and so they went chasing one another. But every little while they stopped to jump up and down in one of the pools of rain water that were glistening everywhere in the faint moonlight, and their long feet splashed. Sometimes they sprang up in the air, and were swept along by the wind and rain. They were very little people. Not one of them was over eight inches high.

As Christopher leaned out of the window watching them, he felt the wind and rain on his face and suddenly he, too, wanted to be out in the wet weather.

He ran back to his chest, and pulling out his clothes was dressed in a minute. Then he climbed quietly out of the window. The Rain Goblins, running

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round and round the house, all stopped when they came to him.

"A human child has come to play with us!" they cried.

They seized one another's hands, and making a circle, went splashing and dancing all around Christopher. He stayed in the circle and splashed and danced too, for he was delighted with the wind and the rain.

Soon the Rain Goblins started running again and suddenly a great gust of rainy wind came by and swept them all right away into the forest. Christopher was swept with them.

When the wind died down, they played among the tree trunks, and every pool they came to, into it they jumped with both feet.

Then suddenly another wind came roaring through the branches. But the Rain Goblins heard it coming this time and cried, "Hold tight! Hold tight! Don't go farther!"

They clung to the bushes and the rocks, and some flung themselves face downward in puddles. The great wind passed over and could not sweep them on with it.

They were playing around a giant tree when one of the goblins squeaked, "Let's go up in the branches and have a swing!"

Then they all began knocking on the tree trunk with twigs and sticks which they had picked up from



“ We only wanted to go up and swing in the branches.”

THE RAIN GOBLINS

the ground,—and some of them kicked the trunk with their feet. Christopher did not understand what it was all about.

Presently a piece of the bark of the tree began to swing out slowly, and Christopher saw that it was a door. An old man was standing in the doorway. His hair was snow white and it whipped about in the wind. His beard was as white as his hair and so long that it reached to the ground.

“Who are you, come pounding at my door?” he asked in a deep windy voice.

“We only wanted to go up and swing in the branches,” piped a goblin voice.

“No, no,” said the old man, “you would track water and mud all over my stairs.”

“We’ll wipe our feet,” cried all the goblins together. “Truly we will.”

“Well, see that you do then. For if I find one speck of dirt after you have gone up I’ll catch you all and tie you out on the rocks and leave you there for the sun to wither.”

That was a terrible threat. Rain Goblins cannot live in the sunlight. It withers them up in a minute. They come out only in the rain and as soon as the weather begins to clear they always hide themselves in the long grass, under bushes or leaves or beneath the rocks.

So they trembled now when the old Tree Man said he would tie them up for the sun to wither. They

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wiped their feet very, very carefully on the grass. Then the Tree Man stood back from the door, and they rushed in and went flopping up the stairs that ran in a spiral to the very top of the tree. There they came out into the branches.

Christopher was on one of the topmost branches and he was a little frightened at first. The wind blew very hard, and the gusts of wind sometimes came near to sweeping him off. But very soon he got used to clinging to the swaying, tossing branch with his legs and arms. The goblins were swinging high and low in the wind and every now and then one of them would whoop and leap to another branch.

But the littlest goblin of all was braver than the others. He made a daring leap and landed on a branch of another tree. The others shouted when they saw him do that. But alas! Poor thing! He dared not jump back again! He sat swinging on his branch and looking towards his brothers with a terrified face.

"Why doesn't he go down through the tree?" asked Christopher. "Hasn't it a stairway like this one?"

"Yes, it happens to have," answered the goblin nearest him. "But that tree is the home of a witch who is very beautiful but very cruel. If she should find our brother in her branches, she would seize him and throw him to the ground. No, he will hardly dare to ask her to open the door to the stairs."

"But what is going to happen to him?" asked

THE RAIN GOBLINS

Christopher, for he saw that the poor little goblin could never jump back.

Before anyone could answer the wind died down, the rain ceased and a pink light bloomed in the eastern sky. It was dawn.

"The sun! The sun!" cried the Rain Goblins, and scrambled back into the tree and rushed down the spiral staircase. Only Christopher stayed swinging on his branch. The little goblin in the other tree could not get down and was screaming and moaning pitifully.

"Wait," Christopher called across to him, "I will save you!" Then he, too, scrambled down into the tree and ran down the stairs. He noticed this time that the stairs were made of strong bark. He saw two or three doors leading from them and thought they must be the doors to the rooms where the Tree Man lived. But he saw nothing of the Tree Man or anyone else. He pushed open the door at the foot of the stairs and sprang out. The Rain Goblins had disappeared; but he saw the long foot of one of them sticking out from under a low growing bush.

"He is hiding from the sun," he thought. "And the others are all hiding near-by, only I cannot see them."

But he had promised to save the poor little goblin, shivering at the top of the witch's tree. The only way he could do that was to climb. It was lucky that the branches began near the ground, for

THE HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THINGS

Christopher was a very little boy. He managed to get to the first branch, however, and then the rest was not so hard.

Up, up, up, up he went. Once he stopped to look down and that made him dizzy. He did not look down again. The sky was getting pinker and pinker. He knew now that he could reach the goblin sometime, but what bothered him was the fear that he might not reach it before the sun did. That, of course, would be too late.

Pinker and pinker and pinker grew the whole sky. The goblin above him shrieked and moaned. Christopher trembled lest the cruel witch should hear the crying and open the door of her tree. Would she throw them both down to the ground, he wondered?

Now he was only three branches below the goblin. Then he was two, then one! He reached up, and, grabbing the terrified little creature, thrust him head first into one of his deep pockets right down among all the other things he carried there. And at that very instant he felt a hot touch on the back of his neck under his curls. He looked around, and there was the sun. He had hidden the goblin away just in the nick of time!

It was as hard climbing down as it had been climbing up, but he managed it somehow and started for home. When he came to the edge of the forest, he saw that the grass all about the House on the Edge

THE RAIN GOBLINS

of Things was covered with a sparkling veil. As he was looking at it in wonder and admiration, a little creature with filmy wings and bright hair came running over the tops of the grass blades. They bent under his feet as they bend under a light wind. It was a beautiful naked boy. He sped past Christopher and disappeared in the forest.

Christopher turned to look after him and saw a great colored half circle in the sky. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, violet! It was a rainbow.

When he reached home Grandame and the others were just having breakfast. They were talking about little Christopher and wondering where he could be. When they saw him standing there in the doorway they had questions enough.

He told them his story and they could hardly believe their ears. They were horrified.

"Didn't you know they were goblins?" cried Stephen. "How dared you get out of the window?"

"Goblins are spirits of the shadow and dark," said Grandame. "You must never have anything to do with them again."

"But it was all such fun!" protested Christopher. "And they didn't hurt me!"

"That was because you did not know enough to be afraid of them," said Grandame.

So little Christopher had to promise never again to jump out of a window into a rain storm.

After he had changed his clothes for some dry ones

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he sat down to his breakfast. But first, he did not forget the poor goblin he was protecting. He slipped it into the pocket of his dry suit when the others were not looking; for he was afraid that if they should catch sight of it they would throw it out into the sunshine.

And often and often in the days that followed Christopher would get into the shadow of a tree or rock and take the little creature out of his pocket. It looked something like a limp, brown piece of dough. It was soft and cool and huddled up in such a way that Christopher could never see its face. It seemed always asleep.

But one night it commenced to rain. Christopher heard the thundering on the roof, and sat upon his oaken chest as he had done that other rainy night. When the hardest of the rain was over,—yes, there came the splashing of little feet and then the noise of little feet running round and round the house.

Christopher jumped down to the floor and took the little creature he had been carrying about in his pocket to the window. There he held it at arm's length out in the wind and wet.

Suddenly the goblin's head shot up, its arms and legs straightened out and it began to squirm in Christopher's grasp.

Then Christopher dropped it gently to the ground. The other goblins made a ring around it and it

THE RAIN GOBLINS

jumped up and down in the middle just as Christopher had done that other time.

Presently there came a great gust of windy rain and all the little creatures were swept away into the forest. Christopher sighed. He would have liked to have gone with them.

After that, every rainy night, little Christopher would lie and listen to the sound of the Rain Goblins' feet running round and round the house and splashing in all the pools. And he always wished that Grandame had not forbidden him to play with them.

"If she would only look at them closely," he often thought, "she would see that they are not cruel and wicked at all, but are just funny little creatures with long pointed feet."

But Grandame never did look at them closely for she had been brought up to beware of goblins.

The smell of rain is lovely
And the feel of rain is good.
And once I stayed all morning
With rain in a wood!

(From Kenelm's verses.)

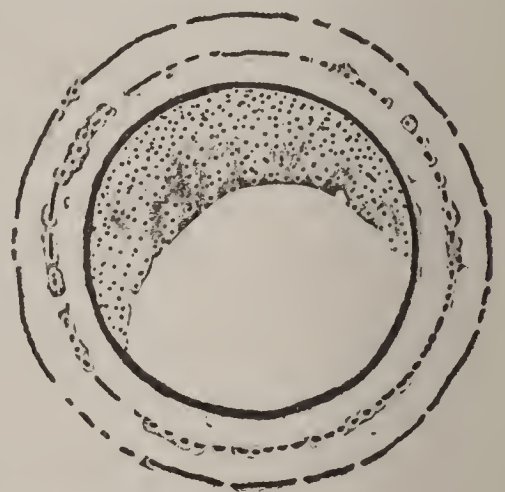


ALWIN & THE BLUE WATER CHILDREN

NOW came summer and the warmest days of the year. The House on the Edge of Things was always filled with twilight because of the silvery curtains which Grandame had hung at the windows to keep out the burning sun. But the children spent most of the day in the forest, taking care to stay well within the shadows of the trees.

One afternoon while they were all sitting in a circle on a deep mossy mound to cool off, Kenelm cried suddenly, "Let's go bathing in the stream!"

"Oh let's!" agreed the others, for it seemed a very good thought indeed.



ALWIN AND THE BLUE WATER CHILDREN

“But,” said Peter, “we had better take the goddess,—servant, I mean,—with us. The stream is in a dark part of the woods!”

“No, no,” protested the others. “So many of us need be afraid of nothing. And besides, she is making bread for our supper. You could never make her leave that!”

So they slid down from the mossy mound and started running towards the stream. It was a long way there and they grew very hot and thirsty. They could hardly wait to get into the cool water.

Alwin was so very eager that he managed to keep always a little ahead of the others, and so he reached the stream first. He stood on a rather steep place on the bank and right under him the moving water grew calm in a still, deep pool. It was so clear that he could see the colored pebbles at the bottom. And down there, too, was the face of the sky, as in a mirror, and all the white summer clouds floating across it.

Alwin stripped himself of his clothes as one strips the husk from an ear of corn, and just as the other children came running up he gave a playful whoop and jumped down feet first into the pool.

Down, down, down, down he went, and the water closed over his head. Now neither Alwin nor any of the children knew how to swim, and he had not stopped to wonder whether the water would be too deep for him. But it was too deep, much too deep, and he began to kick and scream and splash and call

THE HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THINGS

out to the children on the bank to help him. When he realized that his playmates could do nothing for him, he screamed for Grandame. But Grandame was far away sitting in the house carving at her toys, and she could not possibly know that one of her children was in trouble. So Alwin's head went under the second time and a mouthful of water choked him.

It was then that he saw the Blue Water Children. They came swimming around him and pushed him to the surface of the water. Then they began to swim down the stream, bearing him with them.

These children, you must know, are called Blue Water Children because instead of having white skin like Earth-Children, their skin is a rich blue, and their hair and eyes are only a shade deeper. They play under the water as Earth-Children play in the fields and woods. They are the least shy of all the wood creatures, and have no fear at all of being seen by humans. Indeed, they will often stand at the bottom of a stream looking up with curious eyes straight into the faces of Earth-Children. They are adventurous, too, for sometimes they follow a stream right out into the open fields. And once a few years ago, I stood on a bridge in a town, looking down into the water, and *there* I saw a Blue Water Child. I know of no other wood creature who will venture right into the heart of a town!

Now there were four Blue Water Children hurrying Alwin down the stream. He could hear Kenelm

ALWIN AND THE BLUE WATER CHILDREN

and the others running along the bank and calling him wildly, but he could not answer. He was being drawn along too swiftly for speech.

Faster and faster they went,—and then even faster, until they swirled down into another pool. And there the Blue Water Children pulled Alwin right down under the water. He kicked and screamed, but down he went. He heard a pounding in his ears, and opening his eyes as best he could under water, he saw that one of the Blue Water Children was knocking at a door in a rock down there in the water. It opened suddenly, and Alwin was pushed in. He heard the water rushing behind him, and then the door closed and at last he opened his eyes wide.

He was in a little house under the water. For a minute he thought that the woman who had opened the door and now stood courtesying to him was Grandame. Even after he had looked more steadily he still found it hard not to think so. The only difference there seemed to be was that this woman was very young, and of course her skin and hair were blue. Whenever she moved it seemed that she was running, so quick and light were her motions. Indeed she flashed from one part of the little house to another much as Alwin had often seen reflected light flash along a wall.

She, like the Blue Water Children, was far from shy, and was neither surprised nor startled to see an Earth-Child in her house.

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"You are just in time for supper," was what she said.

"We'll have to make the table larger first," said one of the Blue Water Children. He took a sharp little stone and with it scratched out one end of an oblong figure that was drawn on the floor. Then he lengthened its sides.

The other children ran to and fro bringing shells from a cupboard in the wall and setting them down inside the lines scratched on the floor. The largest shell of all was placed in the very center after Blue Water Grandame had filled it with locust blossoms.

"These fell into the stream to-day," she said, "and it is good that they did. We're all getting tired of green leaves three times a day!"

"Um, um!" said the Blue Water Children looking with delight at the great shell of flowers. Perhaps it was not a very polite way of saying it, but "Um um" meant that the locust blossoms made them very hungry.

"Now all is ready," said Blue Water Grandame, and everyone dropped down on the floor and sat cross-legged around the queer table. When Alwin saw them slide so easily into their places, he could not help remembering the little waterfalls in the stream. "They get down just like little waterfalls," he thought.

"But where is the supper?" he asked, for there

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was no food to be seen and he found himself very hungry.

“Why, the blossoms, of course,” cried the Blue Water Children. “And a very fine meal it is!”

Then to Alwin’s surprise, the large shell of blossoms was lifted and passed first to Blue Water Grandame. She helped herself to a double handful and dropped them into her little shell plate. Then they were passed around the table, and Alwin, when they came to him, took some too, for he did not know what else to do. When all were served Blue Water Grandame lifted her shell of blossoms to her nose, and all the Blue Water Children did the same. They breathed deeply and put down the shells.

“Oh, that was *good!*” they said to one another. Then they buried their noses in the flowers again.

Blue Water Grandame noticed that Alwin was just sitting and wondering. “What is the matter, Earth-Child?” she asked. “You are smelling nothing. Don’t you like locust blossoms?”

“Oh yes,” said Alwin, not wanting to be a bad guest. He lifted his shell then to his nose and breathed the sweetness of the flowers with a long breath. Oh, how good it was! And he wanted more and more. And then suddenly he was no longer hungry.

Then Blue Water Grandame pushed back her shell and flashed to her feet. The Blue Water Children, too, rose to their feet—(“like fountains now!”

THE HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF THINGS

thought Alwin)—and there was running to and fro to clear the table.

Alwin did not help them because he did not know what to do with the things. Instead he wandered to a window and stood looking out. All that he could see was dark flowing water. It flowed past the windows of the House under Water just as the wind blew past the windows of the House on the Edge of Things. A little Blue Water Boy came and looked out with him.

“Did you like the supper?” he asked.

“It was good—but queer,” said Alwin. “Where did you ever get such strange dishes?”

“Oh, they are sea shells.”

“Sea shells? What are they?”

Blue Water Grandame and the other Blue Water Children, when they heard this question, drew about Alwin and they were all eager to tell him of the sea. They sat down there on the floor by the window with Alwin in the center and talked of strange things. They told of the long journey of the stream. It flowed on and on for days and nights, they said, until it became a big river.

But Alwin did not know what a river was and so they had to tell him. “A river is a grown up stream.”

Well, then the grown up stream went on and on for days and nights until at last it came to the sea. The sea was a great sparkling blue water which was too large to flow about. It must always stay in one

ALWIN AND THE BLUE WATER CHILDREN

place. But it galloped back and forth in that place like a strong wild animal in a cage. It was very, very deep. Yes, much deeper than the very highest house is high or the very tallest tree is tall. Neither grass nor flowers grew on its banks. No, its banks were low and smooth and white, and made of nothing in the world but sand. It was in this sand that the Blue Water Children found the sea shells.

“But have you been there yourselves?” cried Alwin.

Oh, yes, many times. It was such a pleasant journey, and what sport they always had on the way!

“Are there people by the sea?”

Oh, many people were there. They went out on the sea in ships.

“What are ships?”

Ships were wooded houses with great white wings, but they carried you from place to place like horses.

“How wonderful to travel across the sea!”

Ah, yes, but it was very far!

“But I shall go,” cried Alwin. “I shall go and I shall swim across to the other side and live there in a new country.”

It was too wide to swim across, and besides, it was full of great fish and things that swallow you!

Alwin shivered. “Then I shall get into a ship and fly across.”

“Yes, an Earth-Child can do anything, once he sets his mind on it,” said Blue Water Grandame, and

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as she spoke Alwin saw a shadow fall across her face, and all the Blue Water Children grew curiously still and looked at him wistfully. But the shadow passed, and straightway everyone was bright again.

It grew darker and darker in the House under Water. It became quite dark, and still they stayed, talking eagerly about the sea and other far-away things. Then suddenly all their faces shone out, and the whole room was flooded with silvery light. Alwin flattened his nose against the pane to see where the light came from. He looked down, and there, deep, deep under them, close to the bottom of the stream, hung the moon, full and round and clear. The Blue Water Children flattened their noses beside Alwin's, and said "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "What a fine night!"

"How queer to be looking down at the moon," cried Alwin.

"Not at all," said the Blue Water Children. "Where else would one look for it?"

"What is that?" suddenly whispered one of the children.

Alwin had heard the new sound too. "Why, that is Grandame and the others calling me," he cried, jumping up. "I must go back now. Hark! Little Christopher is crying!"

"You cannot go back now," said Blue Water Grandame quietly. "You have been too long under water."

ALWIN AND THE BLUE WATER CHILDREN

"No, no, you don't want to go back," urged the others. "Stay and play with us!"

Then they all hushed and listened for the sounds again.

"What is that queer little sound that keeps on even when the others stop?" asked Blue Water Grandame.

"I *told* you," said Alwin. "That is little Christopher crying. Oh, please, good water people, where is the door? I must go home."

"Ah, that is a dreadful little sound," whispered Blue Water Grandame, shivering. "We cannot have that. Here is the door!"

But Alwin could never have gone out of that door alone. The water was rushing by it too strongly. Blue Water Grandame and the Blue Water Children bore him out and up through the stream. Ugh! but it was cold!

There on the bank stood Grandame calling to him, and there ran the others up and down and calling too. And little Christopher was running with them crying.

When Alwin scrambled up the bank all cold and wet they leapt at him and each one must run his hand over him to make sure that he was real. Little Christopher hugged him and hugged him. They dried him with Grandame's shawl.

Home through the forest they went by moonlight. Alwin was too sleepy to tell that night of all that had happened to him. He only said over and over again,

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“When I am grown to be a man I am going to fly across the sea in a ship with sails, and live there in a new country.”

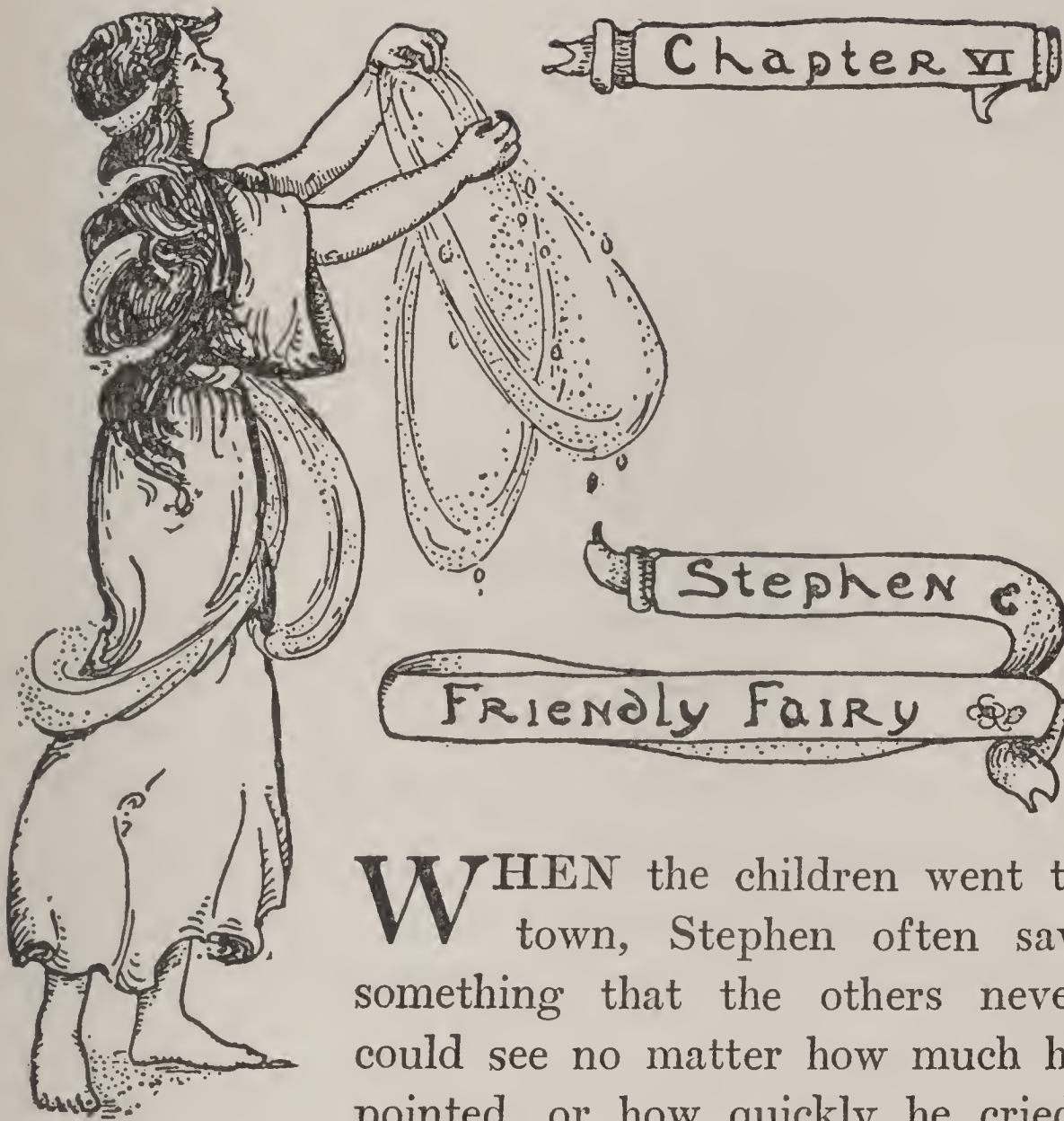
The others looked at him with awe. “Are you?” they asked. That was one of the best things about the House on the Edge of Things,—one’s word was never doubted there.

“Yes, when I am grown,” and so saying, Alwin curled himself into a ball under his light, bright blanket, and straightway fell asleep.

I love roads. I wonder where they go.
Sometime, when I am grown, I’ll go on one
And travel to the end. Perhaps the end will be
The wide blue sea.

“All roads lead to one place,” Grandame once said,
But when we asked, “What is that place?” she shook her head.
She would not tell. And that is just as well;
For I do not wish to know,—but learn myself where
The beautiful roads go.

(From Kenelm’s verses.)



WHEN the children went to town, Stephen often saw something that the others never could see no matter how much he pointed, or how quickly he cried, "Look! Look!"

He saw a young girl, in a violet-colored frock, with bare brown feet and streaming brown hair, who ran before them in the streets and dodged in and out among the people. Stephen often wondered who she

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was and why she ran about barefooted and with her hair unbound. But no one else seemed to wonder at her, and at last Stephen came to believe that he was the only one who could see her.

One afternoon he went alone into the town to buy some candy. A young woman named Myra kept the candy shop. When Stephen reached it she was sitting on the step, for it was a very warm day. She was sitting with her chin in her hands looking away off up the street,—and even farther. She did not see Stephen when he stopped in front of her, and so he put out his hand and touched her shyly on the shoulder. She jumped, and when she saw that it was a child that had startled her, sprang up angrily, and seizing him roughly by the arm, shook him and pushed him roughly back into the street.

“What do I want with you?” she cried. “A stranger’s child!”

Stephen was very much frightened because he did not understand. The shamed tears sprang to his eyes. But just as he was about to run away, the young girl in the violet frock suddenly stood before him.

“Don’t mind Myra,” she said. “Her little boy died this summer. She is unhappy.”

Then it was that Stephen remembered that Myra usually sat with a baby in her lap. That must have been the little boy that died. Stephen was suddenly very sorry for the poor young mother.

STEPHEN AND FRIENDLY FAIRY.

When Myra saw who it was standing in the street and talking to Stephen, she sighed, "Good morning, Friendly Fairy. You haven't paid me a visit for a long time now."

"Oh," said the young girl,—for she it was who was Friendly Fairy, "I have been to your door often enough, but you never ask me to come in any more."

"That is true. I have asked no one to stop with me since my little Nicholas died. I like to be alone."

Stephen was so sorry for Myra that he wanted to make her a gift. He felt in all his pockets, but all he could find was a little wooden man which Grandame had made for him, a whistle, a piece of gingerbread, and a white pebble. He took them all at once and laid them in Myra's lap.

"Oh, the sticky stuff!" she cried, and would have thrown them all down into the street, but Friendly Fairy held her hands.

"They are gifts," whispered Friendly Fairy.

Then Stephen ran away, for he was very shy.

But Friendly Fairy stayed and made a visit. When it was nearly dusk she, too, suddenly ran away. Then Myra rose and went into the shop. She laid Stephen's gifts all in a row on a shelf over the counter.

Then she looked about the room. It was very dingy and dusty and things were lying about all untidily, for of late Myra had had the heart to do very little work. She sighed now and thought that the

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time had come when she must do some cleaning up.

But just at that minute, the little wooden man, the whistle, the piece of gingerbread and the white pebble jumped down from the counter and from there to the floor. Myra screamed and backed into a corner where she stood staring. She thought she must be dreaming.

The little man found a cloth and whisked about dusting the furniture and the counter. The whistle and the piece of gingerbread helped each other in lifting things and putting them where they belonged. A big book had fallen to the floor and that was too heavy for them, so Myra came forward and helped with it. As for the white pebble, she brought water from the well and washed the windows and the floor.

When all was in order and shining and the little shop really looked like itself again, the little man, the whistle, the piece of gingerbread, and the white pebble, everyone gave a big leap and landed back on the shelf and stood there in a row just as Myra had first placed them,—only now they all stood smiling.

“Thank you,” said Myra, and made them a curtsey.

After she had eaten her supper, she went out again and sat down on the step with her chin in her hands. Friendly Fairy came running straight to her out of the shadows.

“My shop is in shape again,” said Myra, “and tomorrow I hope there will be some customers.”

STEPHEN AND FRIENDLY FAIRY

“There will be,—since you have prepared for them. But that is tomorrow. Tonight let’s play with the moonbeams,” laughed Friendly Fairy.

Then those two began catching the moonbeams as they fell on the step and weaving them into chains which they threw about each other’s necks and braided in each other’s hair and laughed quietly.

“This is like old times,” said Friendly Fairy.

“Yes, isn’t it?” nodded Myra, while the tears she had been holding back so long fell from her eyes.

Friendly Fairy caught the tears as they fell and strung them on the last moonbeam chain she had woven. The tears were brighter than the moonbeams. They sparkled on the chain like diamonds. Friendly Fairy flung that wonderful chain about her own neck and suddenly ran away on silent feet.

A bird flew down on sparkling wing;

We hushed ourselves to hear him sing.

Because we harked he flew away,—

He only sings when we will play.

(From Kenelm’s verses.)



AT last it came autumn, and one morning Grandame and the children woke to find the ground covered with snow. It was drifting down in large, slow flakes. The children were almost wild with joy. They ran out of doors and began pelting one another with snowballs, and Grandame had all that she could do to get them back into the house for breakfast. But by noon the wind began to blow and it became very cold. Still it snowed; only now the flakes were fine and sharp. They hissed about the children's ears and cut their faces.

After dinner Kenelm put on his heaviest coat and pulling his cap well down over his ears started out for

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the town. He was going to buy a block of paper to write his verses down on; for Grandame had told him that he really ought to write them down for the Queen, instead of just keeping them in his head as he had been doing. It grew colder and colder as he walked, and he could hardly see through the whirling snow.

Arrived in town, he noticed a great stir there. People were running wildly about, shouting to one another, and many of the women in the street had tears on their faces.

"What is all the fuss about?" Kenelm asked the old shopkeeper who sold him his block of paper.

"What's all the fuss! Is there a soul in the world who doesn't know what has happened to-day? Why the little Princess is lost, of course!"

"Where is she lost?" asked Kenelm, hardly believing his ears.

"Where indeed? If I knew that, my child, I'd be a made man before the night. But she must be somewhere in the forest, for she was riding her pony alone, you know, and she had promised her mother she would ride only to the edge of the forest and straight home again. But she did not come back, and there was the pony without her! If she is not frozen already she soon will be, for this is a terrible blizzard!"

But Kenelm had not heard the last words. He was running home as fast as his legs would take him. It was all the way uphill and against the driving

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snow, but he did not slacken speed for that. And just so fast as his legs were running, just so fast was his mind thinking about the little Princess. She was somewhere alone in the forest in that cold snow storm! What might not happen to her!

He arrived out of breath. The children were all in the house gathered about the fire, and wonder of wonders the servant had forgotten her work and was telling them a story.

“And so the Princess was locked up in a high, white tower,” she was saying, when Kenelm burst into the kitchen.

“Grandame, Grandame!” he cried.

Grandame dropped her work and came running from her room.

“The little Princess is lost in the forest, and I am going to hunt for her!”

They were all frightened. “Oh, Kenelm, don’t go into the forest in this storm,” they begged. “Wait until it is clear and then there will be some chance of finding her.”

“What can a little boy like you do?” asked the servant sharply, because she loved Kenelm though it hurt her to show it. “Don’t you suppose every grown man at the Castle is out looking for her!”

But Peter said, “I will go with you. Come on.”

“No, I am going alone. I shall find her quicker that way. Only do see, Peter, that the fire is kept burning brightly. She will be so cold!”

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Grandame pulled Kenelm's cap down farther over his ears, and buttoned the top button of his coat. She alone had not said a word about his going or not going. But now she opened the door.

"I'll not rest till I see you safe again. So find her quickly," she whispered. But Kenelm's answer was lost in the wind that blew the door shut behind him with a loud bang.

He ran into the forest. There he stopped. It was an endless place, that big white-sheeted forest, and how was he, a little boy, to find a little thing like the Princess in it!

There was a crackling in the bushes and a soldier on a horse plunged out from among the trees. He drew rein when he saw Kenelm.

"Climb up, boy, and I'll see you safe home," he called down kindly.

"Thank you no, for I'm here to look for the little Princess who is lost."

The soldier laughed grimly. "We're all looking for her, but there is no hope of finding her. The snow has covered up all her tracks."

"I'll have my try, too, for all of that," said Kenelm.

"No you won't. You'll come with me. One lost is enough for to-day," and the soldier made a grab for Kenelm. But Kenelm, bless him, was too quick for him! He dashed under his great outstretched arm and dove into the underbrush. The soldier swung his horse about to give chase, but Kenelm was

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already out of sight. Crossly and sadly, too, the soldier spurred his horse out of the forest.

When the soldier was gone Kenelm crept from his hiding place. At that minute a bright spark blew past him with the snow. It was a red leaf. Kenelm remembered then the Stranger-Woman. "If that is who it is," he thought, "then perhaps she'll help me find the Princess." So he ran after the leaf calling and calling.

But it only blew on before him, and though he ran and ran he did not catch it. Instead he stumbled over dead branches hidden under the snow and fell into hollows; but he never let himself lose sight of the red leaf for a minute. His legs began to tremble at last, and he could hardly breathe because the sharp air cut all the way down his throat. He fell to his knees, but the leaf blew on; so he forced himself up again and followed.

The farther into the forest he ran, the barer the ground became. The trees grew so close together there that their branches caught most of the snow and held it. The snow-laden branches looked like a great white roof stretching away and away.

At last Kenelm could run no farther and stopped, leaning against a tree. And at that minute he lost sight of the red leaf and, indeed, forgot all about it, for there was the little Princess coming towards him. She was walking very, very slowly, and her head

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was hanging down so that Kenelm could not see her face. But he knew her by her bright curls. He sprang to meet her.

The tears were frozen in little drops on her long eyelashes and on her cheeks. She was pale with the cold. Kenelm tore off his coat and threw it around her. She seemed not at all surprised that he was there and ready to help her. She only said, "Where is the way home? I have lost it."

"I'll take you first to the House on the Edge of Things, and then get them to come to carry you to the Castle," said Kenelm. The little Princess gave him her hand.

He had no fear of losing his way for he knew the forest well. But it was a long walk to the edge of it. The little Princess was as tired as she was cold, and the steps she took were very little and slow ones. Often she had to stop and lean against a tree, and then it would seem that she could go no farther. But the cold would drive her on.

As they went, she told Kenelm how she had come to be lost. A band of tall white Snow Witches had come swooping and swirling out of the forest, as she rode along its edge, had pulled her from her pony and dragged her away with them. Often they had let her go for a minute, and then she had always started to run home. But they would always catch her and drag her on.

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They had carried her deeper and deeper into the forest until they came to the place where the trees grew so close together that their branches caught all the snow and held it up like a roof. The White Witches danced around and around on the edge of that place and shrieked angrily. They tried to lift the little Princess up and fly with her over the snow roof,—for, for some reason they dared not put their feet to the bare ground under the trees. But she was too heavy to be lifted so high. So at last they gave it up, left her alone there, and went on their way. She watched them sweeping away over the great white roof of the forest.

There was scarcely any breath left in her frightened little body when they were gone. So she lay there in the snow just where they had dropped her until the cold crept in through her clothes. Then she began running about, trying to decide which was the way home. At last she wandered back to the edge of the white roof and went in under it, for she was protected from the wind there and had given up hope of finding her way alone out of the forest.

Then at last Kenelm had come running toward her—and that was all.

While the little Princess was telling her story the children had been coming nearer and nearer to the edge of the forest. But soon the little Princess let go of Kenelm's hand and he saw that she could go no farther. He picked her up in his arms, but she was

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almost as large as he was and he could only stagger along for a little way and put her down again.

Then it was that he saw ahead of them the giant tree that was the Tree Man's house. Christopher had often pointed it out to him.

"Perhaps the Tree Man will give us shelter," he thought. So he picked the little Princess up again and staggered to the tree. He kicked the trunk with his toes and called for the Tree Man just as Christopher had told him the goblins had done. And yes, the door in the bark swung open, and there he stood. He was exactly as Christopher had described him. Kenelm was a little frightened because he looked so very wise, and his white beard was so very long.

The Tree Man was surprised enough to see Kenelm and his burden, as you may imagine. "Come in, Earth-Children," he said quickly. "Or we who are inside will be as frozen as you."

Kenelm stepped in with the little Princess in his arms. The Tree Man closed the door and led the way up two or three steps and there opened another door. Kenelm struggled after him, and there he was in a cozy room. By a little table in the middle of the room a young girl sat sewing. She seemed very shy, for she hardly lifted her head to look at the visitors.

"Daughter," said the Tree Man, "these little humans are nearly frozen."

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Then the girl rose quickly, put her sewing on the table and drew two stools up to the fire.

“Warm yourselves,” she said in the gentlest and shyest of voices.

The little Princess slid out of Kenelm’s arms. But she did not sit on a stool. She dropped to the floor and crept as close to the fire as she could, stretching her hands out over the warm blaze, and almost letting her bright curls hang into it. Kenelm knelt beside her and held his hands to the blaze, too.

The shy Tree Girl went back to her sewing. She was making a white cloak. It was of soft material, fluffy and white as the snow. Kenelm, looking at it, thought it must be a mass of little soft white feathers.

“This,” said the girl, when she saw his eyes on her sewing, “is my new cloak. The snow came sooner than we expected, and so I’ve had to hurry with it. But it’s nearly finished now, and then I shall be able to go out again.”

“She hardly gets her red and yellow autumn things ready before the snow comes flying down,” grumbled the Tree Man. “When I was young, things were not as they are now. Then we could *plan* for the seasons. Autumn was never winter and spring was never summer. No indeed. Then the seasons knew their places and kept them, I can assure you. They never came jumping along before we were naturally

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expecting them. Things were different when I was young."

The tears that had frozen on the little Princess' eyelashes and cheeks began to melt in the fire heat, and rolling down they now splashed on the floor. She laughed (a sound like the breaking up of ice in the tiniest of streams) and pointing to them cried, "Here are *tears* out of season. When I cried them they didn't fall. And now, when I am happy, here they are!"

The Tree Man smiled at that and stopped his grumbling.

"Will you children have something to eat?" asked the Tree Girl.

"Yes, thank you!" said Kenelm. "If it is convenient for you."

So the Tree Girl went to a cupboard in the wall and took out a brown bowl of beechnuts. Then the children feasted indeed.

Now when they had eaten and were warmed and rested they began to speak of going home. But the little Princess shivered at the thought of facing the storm again.

"Don't shiver," said the Tree Girl. "See, my cloak is finished, and you shall wear it, little Princess. Father will take you to the edge of the forest and then bring it back to me."

So the little Princess was wrapped in the wonderful cloak. It felt like the softest feathers. It was

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so very light the little Princess could hardly believe she had it on at all. She felt, even, that it might be easy to fly in it!

"It's getting quite dark," said the Tree Man. "Better have a light before we go." So saying he lighted a candle and stood it on the little round table. Then he drew warm, red, leaf-curtains over the windows.

"If we didn't draw our curtains when we have a light in here," he said, "we'd have all the creatures of the forest peeking in at us. Forest dwellers are the most curious of folk."

Then they were ready to go, and the little Princess kissed the Tree Girl goodbye. It was almost dark outside. The wind was howling over the tree tops and it was colder than ever. But the little Princess was quite snug and warm in her wonderful cloak, and as for Kenelm, *he* was warm with happiness.

When they came to the edge of the forest, there were the Snow Witches dancing around in a circle as though waiting for them. But the children clung to the Tree Man, and the Witches seeing how safe they were, whirled about and flew away shrieking over the forest.

Then it was that Kenelm saw the House on the Edge of Things with every uncurtained window blossoming through the cold and darkness. He knew that Grandame must be very anxious indeed about

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him. He must hurry. But first he took a great frosty breath of happiness.

"That is my house," he said, pointing.

So the little Princess slipped the feathery cloak from her shoulders. The Tree Man took it—and suddenly disappeared in the shadows of the trees.

The children clasped hands then and ran down to the house. A group of horses were standing outside the door, and there was a soldier holding them all by the bridles with one hand, and swinging the other arm about to keep it warm. It was the very soldier who had tried to catch Kenelm earlier in the day. He stared at the children, almost unbelieving. Kenelm, in his turn stared at the soldier, for what could he be doing there by the House on the Edge of Things! He did not stop to ask him, however, but pushed open the door and ran in, drawing the Princess with him.

He stopped, amazed. There stood Grandame in her best cap and apron, and there stood the children, and there stood, in a corner, half a dozen soldiers, and there stood the servant, and they were all looking at a woman who was huddled up on a stool in front of the house fire. *It was the Queen.* But because she was bent over like an old woman, with her face hidden in her hands, Kenelm only knew that it was the Queen by the splendor of her gown.

The little Princess ran to her. "Mother, mother," she cried.

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When the Queen heard that dear voice you may imagine how she sprang up and caught the little Princess to her breast. How tall and straight and young the Queen was then!

"But where did you find her?" they all cried to Kenelm at once. "And how did you get her here?"

"We ourselves, although we scoured the forest for miles, couldn't find her," murmured the soldiers.

But Grandame only said, "You must be hungry."

And, yes, they *were* hungry again, in spite of the beechnuts. So the servant hurried about, and in no time at all two steaming bowls of broth were on the table. Kenelm and the little Princess drew up their chairs.

"But how did you find her?" asked everyone for about the hundredth time.

And at last Kenelm heard them and answered. "Why, I followed the red leaf."

Everyone looked puzzled.

"How is it that the little Princess is so warm and rested?" asked the Queen.

Then the children told about the Tree Man and his daughter and their hospitality.

The Queen laughed. "The cloak was the snow that fell on you," she said. "It's still there—some of it. And the rest was only part of the dream. You must have fallen to sleep out there in the cold, you two, and dreamed some of this."

"No, no," cried the Little Princess, "it was a

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cloak that the Tree Girl made for the winter. The Tree Girl is real. She was friendly and kind," and she looked at Kenelm across her steaming bowl of broth, almost ready to cry because her mother did not believe their story.

Kenelm nodded to her, smiling surely. "Yes, it was truly the Tree Girl's cloak and had nothing whatever to do with the snow or a dream," said his nod and his smile. So the little Princess shook her curls and laughed instead of crying.

Underneath the autumn trees,
On the fallen yellow leaves,
In the forest deep and wild,
Once we found a golden child.

Gold her hair was as the sun,
And her frock was golden spun,
But her face we could not see.
She was crying bitterly.

When we rustled in the leaves,
Quick she popped up to her knees,—
Laughed through sparkling tears and said,
"Who is crying?" Then she fled.

Underneath the autumn trees,
On the fallen yellow leaves,
In the forest deep and wild,
We have lost the golden child.

(From Kenelm's verses.)



ONE evening after supper there was an errand to be done in the village, and it happened that Stephen was the one sent on it. By the time he was ready to start for home again it was really night,—but a big, white night because the sky was filled with stars. All the way up to the House on the Edge of Things, Stephen walked with his nose pretty well up in the air for he could not get the stars out of his eyes and mind.

When he had almost reached his own door, he



“ Was it YOU that fell across the sky ? ” he said.

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jumped in the path and said "Ah!" For right across the sky a star had fallen. A wonderful trail of light, and it disappeared over behind the House on the Edge of Things!

For one instant Stephen stood stock still, and then he ran. He ran past the house without a thought of it and on to the edge of the forest. There in the snow, just outside the tree line, lay something even whiter than the snow. By the time Stephen had reached it, it had risen to its knees. It was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen!

Her face was very white, but a soft shining white that was lovely. Her frock was white and shining too. Her hair was darkest blue! And while she knelt there looking up at Stephen, it just touched the ground in two long braids. Her eyes were the color of the night-blue sky and magical to look into. Stephen could see her clearly for that starlight was, in a way, brighter than daylight.

"Was it *you* that fell across the sky?" he panted. He had run very fast.

"Yes, I fell from our star. We were playing too near the edge. I'm a Star-Child. Who are you?"

"An Earth-Child," said Stephen. "But you seem more than just a child. You're nearly grown up!"

"Oh, star people stay children a long, long while. I won't be grown up for ever so long."

"But didn't your fall hurt you?" asked Stephen.

"No. The trees caught me with gentle arms and

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dropped me softly here in the snow. I am frightened though!"

"But why do you laugh if you're frightened?"

"Why, what else would I do, Earth-Child?"

Stephen hesitated. "You could cry. Most any other girl would cry if she had had such a fall."

"I never heard of crying. I am afraid I don't know how," said the Star-Child, puzzled. Then she started to jump up, but she did not know how to use her light, star feet on the earth.

"Ouch!" She tumbled back to her knees. "The ground is so very strange!" And then, for the first time in her life, tears came into the Star-Child's eyes. Her tears were like starlight itself,—but in spite of that they *were* tears, and Stephen was troubled.

"Oh don't cry, please. Come home with me. You shall play with us boys and have a chest all your own in the sleeping room. Grandame and Kenelm and the others will be glad enough to have you. Don't cry."

"Oh, I cannot stay on the Earth. I know it now. I should die before morning. A Star-Child is meant to live only in the sky. Yet, I have no wings and how am I ever to get back?"

"If I had wings I'd give them to you," said Stephen. "But I haven't any either."

"But haven't any of your playmates wings?"

Stephen thought. And then he cried joyfully, "Yes, the bird fairies have, of course!"

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Now the bird fairies are called "bird fairies" because in the winter, when the first snow falls, they come down from the north and make their homes in the deserted birds' nests in the forest. Fluffy little wings grow on their shoulders. They have very bright eyes. And they are just about the merriest fairies you would care to know. When the birds come back in the spring, the bird fairies stay on a while, teaching them their songs before they fly away to the frozen north, for, though the bird fairies cannot sing a note themselves, they carry any number of lovely songs around in their heads and these they teach to the birds. . . .

This is how it happened that Stephen had made friends with the bird fairies. He loved the wind and storms and high places. And he loved to climb the tallest trees and look off over the wind-tossed forest roof. One winter morning, when he was sitting up in a big tree astride of a branch, a wind suddenly came blustering through the forest. The trees began to groan and rock frightfully, and with the wind came the snow in sharp, cutting snatches. Stephen did not mind all that a bit. He only took a firmer grip on his branch with his knees.

It was then that he noticed the birds' nest in the fork of two branches beside him. Two fluffy-winged creatures were in it, huddled together and looking very much worried.

"First comes the giant," he heard one whisper, "to

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all but step on our house, and now here is a storm worse than any giant! Ha! But that snow cuts!”

“Oh me! Oh!” said the other one. “We ought never to have settled in a nest so high up! How are we to protect ourselves from these sharp swords?” (The swords were the snowflakes.)

“Why, that is easy enough,” said Stephen, “I’ll cover you up with my cap.”

With the words he had snatched the cap from his head and clapped it down over the nest. There was a startled fluttering under it, and then all was still. The storm was over in a little while, and when Stephen took up his cap, there were two very snug, very grateful little bird fairies to thank him. And that very day those two grateful little fairies told all their friends in the forest of the kind giant, and at once all the bird fairies thereabouts were his fast friends. But they would never let themselves be seen by the other children, for bird fairies, like birds, are shy of giants.

But we have not forgotten the poor Star-Child there on her knees in the snow.. It was lucky for her that Stephen had made friends of the bird fairies.

“Wait here,” he said, “and I’ll see if they’ll give you their wings.”

He ran into the forest. “Bird fairies, bird fairies,” he called. “Stephen needs your help.”

At once the air was full of soft fluttering, and the bird fairies flew in a cloud, some to alight on

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his shoulders and dozens to perch on each of his feet.

When they were all settled and the wing noise was hushed, he told them about the poor Star-Child. They listened quietly, as they always did when the Giant Stephen spoke, and then they said, "Our wings don't come off, dear Stephen. It is a pity." Then they put their little heads together to wonder what they could do.

At last one of them cried, "All of us together might manage to lift her and carry her back to the stars."

"Oh, come then and try," begged Stephen, "for she cannot live on the Earth after it is morning."

So the bird fairies followed Stephen to where the Star-Child waited. They surrounded her in wonder, brushing their fluffy wings against her. Then she laughed, and Stephen laughed, and all the bird fairies laughed. That was starry music!

"We're off!" cried the bird fairies, pressing against her with their wings and starting up.

"One minute— Oh let me down again. I want to kiss that Earth-Child goodbye," begged the Star-Child. So they settled down to the ground again.

Now unless you yourself have been kissed by a Star-Child on a white starlit night, you cannot know how glad Stephen was made.

"Goodbye, goodbye," he cried, as the bird fairies again rose with their beautiful burden. He stood there looking up until the lifting cloud of wings and

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the Star-Child melted away overhead in the starlight.

Then his eyelids began strangely to drop and drop, and he stumbled towards home.

Grandame asked no questions that night, for she saw the sleep in his eyes. The other children had tried to wait up for him but now they were sound asleep, their heads buried in their crossed arms on the table. Grandame roused them and hurried them off to bed. She had decided to save the scolding she had made up for Stephen for being so long with his errand until the morning when he would be wide enough awake to take it in. But by the morning, you will be glad to know, she had forgotten all about it!

After breakfast, Stephen took his brothers to see the place where the Star-Child had fallen. It had snowed towards dawn and there were no traces left.

"But what is this!" cried Kenelm, bending over a bit of gold in the snow.

Stephen reached for it. It looked like a bit of the Star-Child's frock. But it vanished under his hand. It was only a sunbeam.

Sometime at night

I mean to lie

In the tip of a tall tree

Under the sky.

I shall not sleep and forget,

But watch all night

Till the bright stars set.

(From Kenelm's verses.)



ONE frosty morning Alwin happened to be up earlier than the others and out of doors. To his joy, he found that a hard crust had formed on the snow over night. The first thing he did was to jump up and down on it to make sure that it was strong. He jumped with all his might but it did not break under him.

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Earlier in the winter the boys had made a sled for themselves. Alwin ran now and dragged it out.

"I'll take a slide on this wonderful crust before ever the others are up," he thought. He meant to slide down the long hill towards the village. But he would not go all the way. No, he would stop about halfway down, and get back in time for breakfast.

Now, just as he was about to run and push the sled and jump on, he saw a strange thing for an Earth-Child to see. He saw the Creatures of the Wind!

Now Grandame had always told the children that the Creatures of the Wind are invisible. Why? Because they are the color of the air, and only on a day that is brighter than a day should be can one see the color of the air.

But this was very early in the morning, a time when all the earth is as bright as a diamond. There was not a cloud in the sky. And now, for the first time in his life, Alwin could see the color of the air. It was purple,—and the Wind Creatures wore purple cloaks. But he could not see why they were called "creatures." They were just growing-up boys and girls.

When he first caught sight of them, they were standing at the edge of the forest, looking off over the snow-crusted world. They seemed so beautiful and so harmless, hovering there all a tip-toe that he

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wanted to call out to them. But almost the instant he spied them, they spied him and suddenly pointed at him. Then it was that Alwin saw their tall purple wings, lifted for flying.

When, with these great wings spread and holding hands, they came sweeping towards him, he was afraid. Wings gave these growing-up boys and girls such a look of strength! The nearer they came, the smaller he felt. And when they were almost upon him, he could stay there no longer but sprang for his sled.

But he was too late. Before the sled was fairly started on its downward flight, the Wind Creatures had overtaken it. Alwin felt them pushing at it, and heard them laughing. Some of the swifter ones ran beside him, brushing their wings against his face. The sled took on speed. Faster and faster it sped, but the Wind Creatures had no trouble at all in keeping up with it. Indeed, it was they who gave it great pushes and made it fly faster.

Down the long hill it rushed and into the village. Only a few people were stirring at that early hour. But before those few could blink once, the flying thing was past, and they could not be sure that they had seen it at all.

Out of the village and down another long hill, and across a field to a wide lake, rushed the Wind Creatures, the sled and Alwin. The ice was smooth and shining on the lake. Alwin saw it a long way off

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and thought it must be the sea about which he was forever dreaming. He began to enjoy his ride. He began to think now that the Wind Creatures were only playing with him and meant him no harm. And how fine it was to be having such a long slide! Never before in his life had Alwin ever traveled so fast. Almost before he had seen the lake he was on it and skimming across. There was a little rise from the opposite bank but the sled took it like a bird. On, on, on,—through another and a strange town, over fields and meadows, he sped, and at last bounded into a long straight road that led to something like a palace in the distance.

All the way the Wind Creatures had kept up with him, laughing and shouting and pushing the sled. But now, on the long road, they grew tired of the game, and waving him a goodbye, sped away over the fields in another direction. But there was one of the Wind Creatures that stayed with him. Now it jumped on the sled behind him. He knew that it was there by the soft touch of its wings as they spread against his cheeks, and the firm pressure of its knees in his back.

They were slowing down now, and Alwin turned to look at his companion. *He could see nothing at all.* It had become invisible as the day had become less bright. But he heard its soft chuckle.

Slower and slower glided the sled down the long road, and at last it stood quite still under the wall

WIND

of the palace. No sooner had it come to a stop than a door in the wall was flung open and a man leapt out. He seized Alwin by his arm and jerked him from the sled. There was a startled outcry and a beating of wings as the last Wind Creature fled away.

"You needn't squirm so," said the man. "That's no use at all. You're the first fairy I've ever laid hands on, and I don't mean that you shall get away. Won't the Prince be tickled though!"

But Alwin did squirm, and kick too. He was very much frightened. The man, however, said not another word, but carried him right up to the front entrance to the palace and into a room where an old man sat before a fire.

"What have you there?" asked the Prince, for a prince it was, staring with great, dark eyes. "A boy?"

"Not a boy at all, Prince, but a real fairy!"

"Hand it here then," commanded the old man, grasping Alwin by the shoulders so that he could not possibly get away.

"Sir, I'm not a fairy! I'm an Earth-Child!" cried Alwin, for he did not at all like being handled so roughly.

The old man frowned. "What makes you think it's a fairy?" he asked the servant suspiciously.

"Why the way it *came*, Prince. Nothing *but* a fairy could come flying along like that. I was cleaning snow from the wall when all of a sudden, away

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off, I saw a thing come flying. Nothing mortal that I have ever seen travels so fast. Sometimes I lost sight of it behind little hills but it always came on again, and it was headed straight for me. Well, Prince, I jumped off the wall and waited behind the door, meaning to jump out and catch it as it winged by. And so I did. And this is the creature I caught. There was another with it for I heard him fly away. But a person can't expect to catch two fairies in one day. So I satisfied myself with the one."

"But, I'm not a fairy, I tell you!" cried Alwin.

"We shall see," said the old Prince, and he began feeling of Alwin's shoulders for wings that might be growing under his coat.

"He isn't a *winged* fairy," he said at last when he had made sure that there were no wings there. "But his feet,—take off his stockings and let me see his feet!"

The servant pulled off Alwin's sandals then, and his warm woolen stockings, and behold his feet were the feet of an Earth-Child, having five toes.

"Very strange," mumbled the servant, much disappointed indeed. "But if it isn't a fairy, then where did it come from?"

"Why, from the House on the Edge of Things," said Alwin promptly. "And it's a pity say I if a boy can't take a slide on his very own sled with-

out being taken for a fairy and caught like this!"

"Don't be saucy," warned the servant. "You're in the room with a Prince, remember!"

"The House on the Edge of Things," murmured the Prince. "That is a queer name for a house. I never heard of such a house. Is it hereabouts?"

"No, it is a long way from here. Grandame and Kenelm and my brothers live there."

"Who is Grandame?" asked the Prince.

"She's Kenelm's grandmother."

"Never heard of her. But wait! Perhaps it's old Granny Grim who passes here every night with her bundle of sticks."

"Indeed, no! When there are sticks to carry, we carry them."

"Well, who is Grandame then? What does she look like? Speak up and prove what you say, or we may still think you're a fairy!"

Now Alwin puzzled and puzzled before he could answer that question. What *did* Grandame look like?

"Why, she most always wears a cap," he said at last.

"All grandmothers wear caps. What is her face like?"

Alwin thought and thought. "Her face is just a face," he said at last. "But her eyes are like the stars."

"What!" cried the old Prince, sitting up in his chair.

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"Yes, like the stars," said Alwin, nodding, for he was sure enough of that.

"Come, come, then. Show me where you live!" cried the Prince. And to the servant he said, "Bring me my coat!"

"It's very cold out, sir. And the boy himself says it's a long way there."

But the old man did not hear him. "Eyes like the stars!" he was whispering. "It can be no other than she—the *Friend of my Youth!*"

"Are you quite *sure* her eyes are like the stars?" the servant questioned Alwin. "For if they are, then your Grandame is the friend of my Prince's youth!"

Alwin was quite, quite sure.

So the servant brought the old man his coat and hat and the three of them set out for the House on the Edge of Things. Alwin and the servant drew the sled, and the old man walked on ahead.

After they had been walking for some time, Alwin said to the servant, "Your master's house is very fine and large!"

"Yes," said the servant, "of course it is. He married a Princess."

Alwin was delighted. "Is she back there at the palace? I should like to see another princess. I have only seen one."

"No, she died long ago."

On and on they went. At last they came to the lake.

“Are you quite sure, little boy, that your Grandame’s eyes are like the stars?” asked the Prince who had stopped and waited until they could come up to him.

Alwin was quite, quite sure.

“It is she. It is she,” murmured the Prince. And he walked on faster.

They stopped in the first town they came to to have luncheon at the inn there. Alwin was very hungry indeed, for he had had no breakfast. But he was not a bit tired. He was enjoying the long walk over the crust in the crisp air.

It was supper time when they reached Alwin’s own village. But they did not stop there. They went on up the hill toward the House on the Edge of Things. It was sunset as they came in sight of it.

“There it is,” cried Alwin proudly pointing.

Every window in the house blazed with the sunset light. The Prince and the servant stopped and stood looking up at it.

“’Tis a pleasant enough place,” said the servant. “But nowhere near so large and fine as our palace.”

“’Tis a perfect place,” said the old man, but he did not move.

“We’ll be just in time for supper,” Alwin said hospitably.

But the old Prince turned his eyes slowly away from gazing and said, “No, no. We are going back now. I only wanted to have one look at the place

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where the *Friend of my Youth* is dwelling." Without another word he turned and walked away. The servant followed him.

Alwin was amazed. "All this way for that," he thought. "Old men are funny!" Then he ran up to the house. Just as he came to the doorstone, the door was pushed open and Kenelm and the others stood on tiptoe there.

"Who were the people with you?" they asked. "That was a fine fur coat the old man was wearing—and such a grand wide hat! He must be a great person. At least a count!"

"He is a prince. He married a princess," said Alwin proudly. Then he asked, "Grandame's eyes *are* like the stars, aren't they?"

"Yes," said the others, readily. "Anyone can see that."

"Then," said Alwin, still more proudly, "*she was the Friend of that Prince's Youth!*"

How good his supper tasted after that day's strange adventure!

When the streams flow,
When the winds blow,
When the birds rush through the sky,
I long to go
Gloriously so!
Why can't I fly?

(From Kenelm's verses.)



THE children were playing in the snow away back in the forest. Kenelm and Peter had wandered even farther in than the others. They came to a deep snowdrift down in

a hollow among some rocks.

"Let's dig a hole here," suggested Kenelm. "When we hide in it the others will have a hard time finding us."

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“That’s an idea,” said Peter. Then the two set to work. The snow was soft and loose. It was easy enough to scoop it out with their hands. They worked together silently until “There, the hole is just about large enough now,” said Peter straightening up.

“But what is this?” cried Kenelm, starting back.

There in the snow shone a bit of something that looked like gold. They felt of it,—and found that it was a bright curl! Hastily they dug a little deeper and uncovered a lot of bright curls. They were growing on a head!

“What can it be?” they whispered to each other, trembling,—for they could think nothing else but that the owner of those bright curls must be buried in the snowdrift, frozen and dead.

Quickly they dug a little deeper. Yes, there was the body. Breathless, they scooped all the snow away from it, and there was a young man sound asleep! They could not see his face for it was buried in his crossed arms.

“He is only asleep and not dead,” whispered Kenelm, “for see how he is breathing.”

Peter touched the bright curls. “Wake up,” he said softly. “Who are you?”

The young man only moved a little, burying his face deeper in his arms.

“Wake up! Wake up!” cried Peter again, this

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time much louder. "You ought not to go to sleep in a snowdrift!"

The young man yawned, stretched himself and rolled over on his back. He had a wonderfully bright face. The children drew back in awe of its beauty. He still slept, but he frowned a little as though he heard Peter's voice through his dreams.

"Come, we must wake him," said Kenelm decidedly. Then they seized the young man and shook him by the shoulders.

Now he did wake indeed. He sat up in the snowdrift. "What's all the fuss about?" he asked. "Am I late?" Then seeing who it was had disturbed him, he stared. "Who are you?" he cried.

"We are—*we*. Who are *you*?" they asked in hushed voices.

"Why, I am Spring," said the young man. "But you have no right to break into my sleep like this! I was having such fine dreams, too! And only look, the snow is all around. It isn't time for me to wake up at all. Or,—are you messengers from the Sun?"

"No, we are just children," admitted the boys, abashed a little.

"Well, I have never been waked by just children before," said Spring crossly. "The best thing you can do now is to cover me up again quickly and go away. The Sun, whose business it is, will uncover me again all in good time."

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"Oh, it will take the Sun a long time to find you down among these cold rocks," cried Kenelm, kneeling by the young man. "And it has been winter so long! We are tired of winter! Come and play with us, Spring. Please do!"

"Oh, oh, Ahhhhhh! I *am* so sleepy! And it *was* such a nice dream!"

"Tell it to us then," said Peter, who unlike most people liked hearing dreams.

"Why it was all about how I was running a race with the crocuses, and they were just at my heels. But I was winning!"

"*I'd* rather be running a *real* race than dreaming about one," said Kenelm.

Spring turned toward him with a beautiful, sleepy smile. "Yes, that's right. *I'd* rather too. But you are wise for just a child!"

"So you will get up?" cried the boys, encouraged by his smile.

For answer, Spring reached up his hands to them. They pulled, and he bounded to his feet.

"Hurray, let's take him to Grandame and the others!" cried the happy children. "And the goddess—she will like seeing him too!"

And they ran off through the forest drawing their new playfellow with them. As they ran, green grass sprang up under their feet and the trees rang with bird-songs.

And now the Earth-Children saw many things that



“ Come and play with us, Spring . . . ”

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had always been hidden from them before. There were all the stranger forest people caught out in their white clothes and hurrying home to change to green. And there was the shy Tree Girl running towards them. When she had almost reached them she suddenly lifted her eyes and saw Spring and the children. Like a flash, she hid behind a bush. Kenelm understood her shyness because he was a poet, and when the others would have called to her, he pulled them on. He was sorry for the Tree Girl. "For now perhaps she will have to sit up all night sewing on her green frock," he thought.

Then before them scurried the beautiful, cruel witch, and banged the door of her tree shut in their faces. But she opened it again on a crack to mock them as they passed. "I'm not sorry to be seen by you Earth-Children," she called. "I'm so beautiful whether in white *or* green that you may well look at me!"

But strangest of all were the Snow Witches. They were gathered in a glade, evidently having some sort of an argument, for they were waving their long arms about excitedly and tearing their streaming hair in fury. But when they saw Spring they instantly grew still as still and all crouched down behind a hollow tree that was lying on the ground. Spring and Peter paid no attention to them but Kenelm stopped and grabbed one of the trembling witches by her streaming white hair.

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“Cruel Snow Witch,” he cried, “why did you torment the little Princess?”

The witch did not answer him, but her knees shook frightfully.

Kenelm could not resist shaking her well, remembering that fearful day when the little Princess had been lost.

“I have a good will to drag you home with me and tie you in a chair for the fire to serve,” he said.

At that the witch covered her face with her hands. “Don’t do that,” she whispered, and her great witch-eyes peered out at him through her fingers. “Let me go away with my sisters to hide in the deep forest. When it is winter again I promise never to torment any of you. Only let me go!”

“Oh, you are meek enough now because Spring is here,” laughed Kenelm. “But when winter comes and you are strong again, see you keep your word!”

So saying he let go her hair, and she tottered weakly away over the ground to find her sisters who had forsaken her. Kenelm hurried on to catch up with the others.

Soon there was much shouting and laughing. It was the other children. They had been snow-balling each other, but they stopped to laugh when the snow suddenly melted away in their hands. How rejoicingly they greeted their returned companions—and Spring!

Then altogether they ran towards the House on

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the Edge of Things. From the edge of the forest they saw that all the windows and doors were open. And in the doorway stood the goddess, her work utterly forgotten. Grandame was bending over something out in the garden.

She saw the children and beckoned them. Spring reached her side first. She seemed not at all surprised to see him but showed him the little crocuses that were just peeping above the ground. His face fell.

"The scamps!" he cried. "They have beaten me here!"

"Where are you going?" shouted the children, running up,—for Spring had started off at a great pace down the hill.

He turned at their voices. "I'm going to beat the crocuses into town at any rate," he called, running backwards a second. "But I must run to do it!"

And then he turned and *did* run, leaping and bounding down the long hill into the village. The villagers saw him coming and opened their doors and windows to watch the race. And lo—the crocuses were just at his heels.

But he won. So Spring's dream came true.

We dance to meet the Seasons.

We joy to see them come.

We joy, too, to see them go,

'And greet another one.

(From Kenelm's verses.)



ONE morning when Grandame opened the door of the House on the Edge of Things there stood a Stranger-Woman on the doorstone.

“Good morning,” said Grandame.

“Good morning,” said the Stranger-Woman.

Kenelm ran to look over Grandame’s shoulder. When he saw who it was standing there he pulled Grandame by her sleeve.

“’Tis the red leaf,” he whispered. Then he went out and gave the Stranger-Woman his hand. He was delighted and excited to see her again.

“Will you honor us by sharing our breakfast?” asked Grandame, looking very hard at the woman; for if she should suddenly take it into her head to

THE STRANGER-WOMAN

turn into a leaf again Grandame meant to see how the trick was done.

“Thank you. I have come far.”

All the children gathered around her in the kitchen, staring with wide, wide eyes because she was so beautiful.

“You say it is a long way you have come?” asked Grandame, when they were seated at the breakfast table.

“From the deepest place in the forest,” answered the woman.

The children grew wider eyed. They had never been to the deepest place in the forest but they knew that it must be very dark and wild. They had heard it said that all cruel witches and goblins made their homes there.

“Isn’t it lonely?” asked Peter. “Aren’t you afraid?”

The Stranger-Woman laughed and shook her head. “I wonder that you children have never wanted to explore it,” she said. “You see, in a way, the forest all belongs to you because you play in it. So, I should think you would want to know all about it.”

“We do,” they answered. “But the deepest place has always seemed so far away,—and so dark!”

The Stranger-Woman looked puzzled at that. “If you will come with me now I will take you to see for yourselves just how far away and dark the deepest place is,” she said rising.

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The children looked at one another a little startled, but glad too. "Why not?" their eyes said.

"And that is just the reason I am here," said the Stranger-Woman. "I grew tired of waiting all these months for you to come to the deepest place,—and so here I am to fetch you."

And that is how it came about that Kenelm and Peter and Stephen and Alwin and even little Christopher set out for the deepest place in the forest one early summer morning. Grandame, whose curiosity was as great as the children's, suddenly said she would go too. And then even the goddess asked to join them. They set off joyfully because it was such a beautiful summer morning and because they were going on an adventure.

All the way Grandame kept a sharp eye on their guide for she expected her to turn into a leaf at any minute. But the beautiful Stranger-Woman remained a beautiful Stranger-Woman to the end and she walked quietly along like an ordinary human behind the children with Grandame and the goddess. If at times she wanted very much to become a light, free, dancing leaf and whirl ahead with Kenelm and the others she did not let herself.

It was almost noon when at last she said, "We are nearly there."

Then the trees suddenly began to crowd closer and closer together. It was like night under their interlocking branches. The children hung back, press-

ing closer to the three women. Then came the pattering of little feet in the shadows around them. Oh, how those little feet did patter! Strange creatures fled before them in the forest twilight. Closer and closer the Earth-People drew together. Only the Stranger-Woman stepped boldly forward. Grandame took little Christopher's hand. "Courage," she whispered.

"Here we are," said the Stranger-Woman's voice from the darkness. That singing voice gave them heart. They shut their eyes and pushed ahead into the darkness. There the pattering of little feet grew louder and louder. Little Christopher never let go of Grandame's hand.

The darkness lasted only a minute. Then a sudden light drew their eyes wide open. They had come out from the crowded trees and were standing on the top of a little hill. Before them the world stretched away as far as their eyes could see. Right at the foot of the little hill flowed a broad river. It was the forest stream grown up. Fields and meadows were all about, smiling in broad sunshine. Beyond the fields rose the walls of a city, its towers and steeples gleaming. Beyond the river, beyond the fields, beyond the city, lay a great blue water that lost itself, after a long look in the sky. It was the sea!

"The sea! The sea!" cried Alwin, half beside himself with joy. "Oh, look at the winged ships. Look! Look!"

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But everyone *was* looking. It was a company of *eyes* there on the little hilltop.

Peter asked, "Where is the deepest place in the forest then?"

"Why, this is it," said the Stranger-Woman.

"The trees begin again somewhere over there on the other side of the sea."

So that was the place they had feared and dreamed about! Just a great sunny place full of beautiful, smiling fields, the city and the sea!—Then what was that other part of the forest like, that part beyond the sea, Alwin wondered.

"What a fine place to live on this hilltop would make!" exclaimed Kenelm.

The Stranger-Woman looked very much pleased at that. "That is just what I hoped you would say."

"What should we name our house here?" asked Grandame.

The children all turned to Grandame in quick surprise. Could she really be thinking of building a new house for them here! They were dismayed.

"It's wonderful here," said Kenelm, suddenly breathless. "But I was only *imagining*. Our old house is quite good enough.—Besides, the poppies we planted haven't even begun to come up yet. We certainly want to see what colors they will be. So, oh please let us go back, if only for a little while, and live in the House on the Edge of Things."

His comrades cried out at that, "Oh, Kenelm! Why?"

"Of course we can come back here often and look off towards the city and the sea," he said hastily. "Now that we've once found where it is, it will be easy to come again."

It began to look as though Kenelm were pleading with the Stranger-Woman, as though she had the power to make them build their house wherever she would. Suddenly she looked very large to the children, and almost terrifying. But what she said was kind enough, though she seemed disappointed.

"You are such brave sturdy children that I have wanted to bring you to this hilltop for months. I see now I have come for you too soon. But I must not hurry you. I was too eager. You are such sturdy children! Well, then run away back to the edge of the forest, if you must, for a little while longer."

Little Christopher who until now had been silent, suddenly clapped his hands. He shouted, "Hurray! We're going back!"

So they said goodbye to the Stranger-Woman. "But soon," she called after them, "I'll come for you again. Remember and watch for me!"

Kenelm turned back to cry, "Yes, we'll watch for you, and be glad to see you,—sometime."

Then he bounded on to overtake the others.

The children pranced and shouted and sang much of the way home. Even Grandame danced a little,

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danced like a blade of grass in the wind and sun, she was so very happy.

That night they lighted a fire on the hearth, for although it was early summer, the evenings were cool. After supper they sat down quietly before the bright blaze while Grandame told them a story. It was a story about sea serpents and talking animals and fairy godmothers and the Land of the Stars. It was a story to delight the heart of any child. But long before the end little Christopher had fallen fast asleep with his head in Grandame's lap.

Here in our house
On the edge of things,
We hear the beat
Of steady wings
'Gainst the doors and windows.
Hush!

Low glows the fire.
Grandame is asleep.
Hush! On our toes
And out doors creep.
We can't see. But we hear!
Hush!

Open the doors,
And the windows, too.
Let in the wings.
Oh! Let them through.
'Round the room hear them beat!
Hush!

(From Kenelm's verses.)



Kenelm

Christopher



Stephen Alwin Peter

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